

BELLE EPOQUE


POSTERS & GRAPHICS



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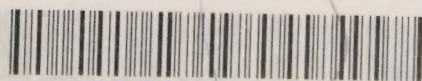
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Frontispiece

Helleu

Mademoiselle Hamoir de profil. Drypoint in colour.

Title page

Frontispiece for *Cours de danse fin de siècle/Lessons in the Can-can*, 1892. Etching and aquatint hand-coloured *à la poupée* by the artist.

Opposite

Steinlen

Sur la plage/On the beach, 1900. Colour lithograph. Proof before letters.

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INTRODUCTION

The last fifteen years of the nineteenth century and the first fourteen of the twentieth saw the triumph of the original print. The battles fought by Bracquemond and others to establish the supremacy of the painter-etcher over the interpretative craftsman who transferred existing paintings by various artists onto the copper plate had been won. A multiplicity of art movements coexisted: Impressionism was established, as were Symbolism, Art Nouveau, Idealism, Realism; the Salons flourished with their own varieties of academicism, while the latter part of that thirty-year period saw the rise of Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Art Deco, Futurism.

It has long been fashionable to exclusively admire the graphic *oeuvre* only of those artists who had established their reputations as painters. It is true that a number of great painters also produced some great original prints, frequently with only the minimum tutelage in technique. Here, however, the role of the printer in coaching, encouraging, printing and proofing is frequently overlooked. Modest in scope in relation to the printing of black and white etchings, the role of the printer becomes huge when dealing with colour prints. There are two basic ways to print a colour etching. The first involves using several plates, one for each colour. A long and tedious procedure demands that the colours should be printed in sequence, with time required between each printing for the ink to dry, each proof needing to be registered in such a manner that each subsequent plate is placed in the right position for its colours not to overlap in the wrong places. The second way, colouring *à la poupée*, involves dabbing a single plate with the several colours simultaneously for a single printing. This means the plate has to be literally repainted for each proof, and makes it almost impossible to achieve uniformity of colour in each proof of an edition.

The middle eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the golden age of the colour print. Etchings and aquatints as well as lithographs were avidly bought by the public which demanded colour. Some painters were prepared to submit to the discipline necessary to create prints in colour. Others chose the easier path of submitting a watercolour to a good printer, and letting the printer and his staff transfer the image onto stone or metal plate, the artist doing little more than approving of the final effect and signing the proofs, a practice carried out by a number of well known artists today. The only perceptible difference between such prints and the prints of interpretation executed by various copy-craftsmen in earlier times was that the latter

never pretended they were producing original prints from the hand of the painter.

There was also a small group of artists who were primarily graphic artists, and only incidentally painters. They were frequently absolute masters of their craft, experimenters who greatly widened the possibilities of their medium. Some were their own printers, but none disdained working with the great printers such as Delâtre, himself a fine graphic artist, Ancourt, Clot or Chaix, all of whom employed superb craftsmen who delighted in sharing their expertise.

The term 'Belle Epoque' encapsulates a style more than an era. There is style in the clothes: elegance, self-confidence, beauty; each feathered hat is a creation, not a confection. There is style in the subjects: elegant women at home, promenading, at the ball, making up, dressing, shopping, with their lovers, alone, on stage, or waiting for a client. There is style in the treatment: flamboyant or wistful, dealing with high or low life, domestic or public occupations. There is style in the imagery, even when cruel in the observation. This accumulation of style in every aspect of execution itself forms an immediately recognisable style which transcends the appeal of nostalgia.

The artists discussed here were instrumental in creating the image of the Belle Epoque. Using conventional techniques of etching, drypoint and mezzotint, Tissot accurately fixed for ever the look both of the grand bourgeois ball and of the intimacy of family life. Helleu used the drypoint medium with breathtaking facility to bring to life the faces and features of so many beautiful (and some less beautiful) women. Legrand developed the aquatint to a degree one would consider without peer until one discovered the totally different effects achieved through use of a variation of the same technique by Manuel Robbe. Chéret created the modern poster, using colour lithography in new ways which enabled the technique to be used both for the street placards of Toulouse-Lautrec, Steinlen, Grasset and Mucha and for portfolio prints. Each of the artists discussed appropriated one or more aspects of daily life to develop and portray. Some lived long and comfortable lives, others short and tragic ones. One regrets that lack of space precludes more than a bare mention of such artists as Charles Maurin, who depicted mothers and children with great love; Hermann-Paul, who analysed the foibles of his day with humour as well as accuracy; Richard Ranft, Henry Somm, Georges Bottini, Norbert Goeneutte, Henri Boutet, Albert Besnard, Alfred Muller, each of whom has left a substantial body of work: and Jacques Villon, one of the greatest masters of the technique.

Georges Bottini
La Galerie Sagot. Colour lithograph.

ENTRÉE

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PARTE



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The proliferation of political and satirical illustrated weekly magazines in Paris in the last quarter of the nineteenth century gave steady employment to a number of young artists, including Steinlen, Legrand and Lautrec. The discipline involved in submitting regular drawings enabled those artists to develop speed, accuracy and economy in the means used to achieve their effects. The role of the print publisher was, however, of paramount importance in the development of the graphic artist. Some, like Kleinmann were straightforward publishers of original prints and sheet music. Others, like André Marty, who launched *L'Estampe Originale*, were dedicated to the medium of graphics. Still others primarily ran a gallery, with publishing as an adjunct. Of these Gustave Pellet, Edmond Sagot and Ambroise Vollard were the most notable. Pellet published mostly as an act of friendship. His first and steadiest artist was Louis Legrand, the majority of whose works he was

to publish until Legrand outlived him. He also published Lunois and some of the most daring and attractive plates by Lautrec. Vollard was much more of a businessman, commissioning original graphics primarily from renowned painters, regardless of whether they were technically competent, or even whether they were willing to learn. He needed their name and their image — the rest could be safely left to the printer. Sagot was the most persistent and most active. Apart from Tissot, whose printmaking years slightly antedated the opening of Sagot's gallery, and Lautrec, all the artists discussed in the text had prints published by Sagot. Although unable to commission Lautrec, Sagot was one of the main purchasers of Lautrec prints after the artist's death, thus becoming, if only posthumously, a leading Lautrec dealer. It would be difficult to overstress the part played by these and a few other publishers in coaxing, cajoling and encouraging their artists.



Tissot
En plein soleil/In the Sunshine, 1881. Etching.

Opposite
Hermann-Paul
Salon des Cent, 1895. Colour lithograph poster.



JAMES TISSOT

(1836-1902)

Tissot is the quintessential celebrator of the era. In both his paintings and his graphics he fixed forever the look of the period: not only the clothes, of course, in great and loving detail, reproducing each fold and fall, each pattern and seam; but also the attitudes, occupations, outings, all the preoccupations of the 'grande bourgeoisie', of 'Society'.

Jacques Joseph Tissot was born at Nantes on October 15th, 1836. It was then a most important sea port, and Tissot's parents appear to have been fairly well-to-do. He showed early aptitude for art, and was sent to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he studied under Lamothe, Flandrin and Ingres. He made several friends in Paris, including the young Whistler and Degas. His style, however, owed nothing to them. He exhibited at the Salon as early as 1859. The painting he exhibited there in 1861, *The Meeting Of Faust And Marguerite*, was purchased by the State for the Luxembourg Museum, later transferring to the Louvre.

His success at the Salon brought him in contact with fashionable Society. This was the heyday of Napoleon III's Second Empire, glittering, preoccupied with the trivial, the superficial and the mundane; a world in which the fashionable woman shared her time between the social occasions of devotion in church and those of ballroom and drawing room. Tissot became the chronicler of those social occasions. With meticulous accuracy he depicted each and every outing, making sure that no individual would be recognised, only the occasion, each painting thus becoming an archetype of the social occasions against which all subsequent ones could be measured. Tissot was taken up by the society he depicted, was fêted and commissioned. When commissioned he executed portraits, both individual and of groups, such as that of members of the most exclusive clubs. He himself became a member of those clubs, was seen at the most fashionable establishments, had his entrée into the best homes and was frequently seen at the races. A handsome, well dressed man with impeccable manners, he was a great success with women, both socially and emotionally. He lived in his own house in the avenue de Bois de Boulogne, a most fashionable address, and he furnished his house with the most exquisite furniture, paintings, *bibelots* and *objets d'art*.

Tissot began his association with England in 1864, when he exhibited a picture at the Royal Academy. In 1869 he began to supply the magazine *Vanity Fair* with caricatures of well

known people, from Napoleon III and the Czar to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He also painted the occasional portrait in England.

The outbreak of war between France and Prussia in 1870 was soon followed by the defeat of Napoleon at Sedan. Only Paris still held out, besieged by the Germans. Tissot joined a group of sharpshooters in the defense of Paris, and was involved in many skirmishes. Thomas Gibson Bowles, founder and owner of *Vanity Fair*, turned up in Paris as a correspondent for the London *Morning Post*, and there met up with Tissot. In the midst of the siege Tissot found time to execute sharp caricatures of the Prussian Kronprinz and of Bismarck, which he and Bowles succeeded in smuggling through the Prussian lines to England.

With no hope of relief, with Paris bombarded by the Prussians who also succeeded in cutting off the Parisians' supply lines so that no more food could be brought in, the city eventually surrendered at the end of January, 1871. As the Germans marched into Paris Bowles returned to London.

As the new French republican government set up at Versailles signed a peace treaty with the Germans, who annexed Alsace and much of Lorraine, its National Assembly attempted to disarm the Paris National Guard which had defended the city. In the municipal elections of March the Commune, a provisional government of Socialists and left wing Republicans, was elected. Curiously enough the dandy Tissot rallied to the Commune. Though this appeared inexplicable to many of his contemporaries, and attempts have since been made to explain this away as an attempt to protect his property, there seems little doubt that he felt a strong emotional link with the people of the Commune, at whose side he had fought so bravely against the Germans. He certainly felt very bitter towards the Versailles government which had made no attempt to organise a relief of the siege and had instead attempted to disarm the Parisians once the siege had ended.

The Commune lasted until May, when the Versailles troops marched into Paris, occupying it street by street, massacring some twenty thousand people in the process. Many Communards were tried and shot. Tissot fled to London where Bowles welcomed him into his home. That same year Tissot contributed twenty three caricatures to *Vanity Fair* as well as finding time to paint several pictures. Bowles introduced him to a useful cross-section of London Society, which soon took him up. From 1872 he was exhibiting regularly at the Royal Academy.

Within a year of his arrival in London he had bought himself a house in St. John's Wood. He renewed his old acquaint-

Opposite

La Plus jolie femme de Paris/

The Most Beautiful Woman in Paris, 1885. Etching.



Soirée d'été/Summer Evening, 1881. Etching.

ance with Whistler, and began to study etching and the art of drypoint with Whistler's brother-in-law, Francis Seymour Haden. A year later he bought a larger house at 17 Grove End Road, also in St. John's Wood. It contained a pond in the grounds, and Tissot built a colonnade along the shore.

In 1875 Tissot began to publish his etchings, producing some fifty-four in the next eleven years. Many are related to his paintings. Some are based on sketches he had executed during the siege of Paris. Some of the loveliest depict scenes from his private life. He had met and fallen in love with a Mrs. Newton, the sister of a neighbour. She was divorced, a state not recognised by the Roman Catholic Church to which both belonged. They could not marry but she came to live with him. Conscious of the stigma attached to a divorced woman, Tissot ceased to frequent the society he had courted so assiduously. He and Mrs. Newton retained a very small circle of intimate friends. They went to picnics in the country, to Ramsgate for a holiday and may have travelled briefly to Paris. When visitors called on Tissot Mrs. Newton was never seen. Jacques Emile Blanche visited Tissot, as did Paul César Helleu, Boldini and John Singer Sargent. Of these only Helleu saw the mysterious lady and then only by chance when he lost his way in the large house.

Mrs. Newton's death, in her late twenties, of tuberculosis, deeply affected Tissot. He plunged himself into work and spent his evenings with the spiritualists and *magnetiseurs* who had always fascinated him, in the hope of communicating with her. Finding life alone in London intolerable he left for Paris, taking nothing but clothes and canvases with him. His house was sold to Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema.

Degas never forgave Tissot's involvement with the Commune,

but Helleu, Boldini and Forain were close friends. He once again frequented the night clubs and dance halls, yet devoted more and more time to spiritual matters. His last major secular set of works was a group of paintings, which he also executed as a set of etchings, devoted to 'Woman in Paris': *The Ambitious Woman*, *Those Ladies on the Chariots at the Hippodrome*, *Without a Dowry*, *The Mysterious One* and *The Most Beautiful Woman in Paris*. In 1886 he abandoned such interests and set sail for the Holy Land via Egypt, also visiting Syria and the Lebanese coast. Four months in the Middle East and a fervent plunge into the Bible were followed by two years of concentrated work. In 1897 he exhibited three hundred and sixty works illustrating the New Testament; they were exhibited in London the following year. The publisher Lemercier paid a million francs for the reproduction rights, and a two volume edition reproducing them was published in France and Britain.

A further trip to Palestine was followed by six years devoted to illustrating the Old Testament. The last two years were spent at the Abbey of Buillon, where he died on August 8th, 1902. His great fame only a few years earlier had vanished. His death was almost unnoticed, the Old Testament drawings vanished.

Tissot's prints form a precious body of work for anyone studying the period. In them he reproduces aspects of daily life, the stuff of manners and dress, with even more attention to detail than in his paintings, compensating with precision of line for the lack of colour. Most are etchings with drypoint, though there are also a couple of mezzotints. His appeal to the Society of his day was the combination of traditional style with utterly 'modern', that is to say contemporary, subject. That remains its appeal.



Ces Dames des chars à l'Hippodrome/Those Chariot Ladies at the Hippodrome, 1885. Etching.



Dimanche matin/Sunday Morning, 1883. Etching.



Au bord de la mer/By the Seaside, 1880. Etching.



Printemps/Spring, 1878. Etching.



L'Hiver/Winter, 1880. Etching.



Le Croquet/Croquet, 1878. Etching.



Rêverie, 1881. Etching.

Opposite

Helleu

Le Chapeau à plumes/The Feathered Hat. Drypoint coloured à la poupée.







Opposite above

Legrand

Soupeurs/Diners, 1904. Colour aquatint.

Opposite below

Legrand

Cyclistes, 1900. Colour etching and aquatint.

Le Hamac/The Hammock, 1880. Etching.



L'Été/Summer, 1878. Etching.



L'Ambitieuse/The Ambitious One, 1885. Etching.



PAUL CESAR HELLEU

(1859-1927)

Born on December 17th, 1859 at Vannes, Paul César Helleu was twenty-three years younger than Tissot. His father had died while Helleu was still a baby. Brought up by his mother, he had had some difficulty in persuading her to allow him to study painting, but eventually enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1876, where he became a student of Gérôme. While still a student he began to work for the ceramist Théodore Deck as a decorator. On leaving the school he spent two years working full time for Deck. No longer a copyist, he decorated plates for Deck with paintings of beautiful women, often using the 'Deck blue' that the ceramist had developed, as well as gold. Even after leaving Deck's employ he continued to decorate occasional pieces for him for some years. Deck himself later became the head of the Sèvres works. Boldini, already a friend, painted a ceramic plate with a portrait of Helleu painting a plate with the face of a beautiful woman.

Whistler, Sargent, Rodin and Alfred Stevens had become friends. Helleu was then painting in oils and specialising in portraits. In 1884 he was commissioned to paint the portrait of fourteen-year-old Alice Guérin by her father. He was captivated by her. Two years later, when she was sixteen, they were married, and Helleu moved in with his in-laws, remaining there some two years.

Helleu had already travelled to Holland with Sargent and to England with Gérôme, renewing old acquaintances and making new friends. One such new friend was Tissot, whom he saw several times in London and again in Paris on the latter's return there. In addition to painting Helleu was also doing a great deal of work in pastels when, in 1885, the whole future direction of his life was changed. Tissot had decided to give up secular life and was preparing to go on his first artistic pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Having decided he would no longer engrave, he gave Helleu his diamond.

The moment Helleu set the diamond to a copper plate he realised he had discovered his true medium. In his hand the diamond ploughed a powerful furrow in the soft copper surface, the gouged-out burrs producing a velvet-smooth line that was sure and rich. He found there was little he could not do with the medium: a very little hatching and cross-hatching could evoke shadows; his hand was so sure he did not need to engrave from preliminary drawings, but could attack the plate directly from the live model. Using a large plate he would occasionally engrave, say, a woman's face in the upper part, then let the single line of her throat swoop down the blank plate in a sure

line that would thin to a point where it merged imperceptibly with the surrounding white.

The medium also appealed to his sitters. The look of a dry-point is one that pencil or ink drawing can never duplicate, utterly rich and sure. And it had the added advantage that a sitter could have several proofs printed to give to relations or friends.

In 1886 Helleu met Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, the poet and aesthete, who purchased a number of his dry-points as the start of a large collection. He was later to write a book on Helleu which was published in 1913. Montesquiou introduced Helleu into the Salons of the old aristocracy as well as into the literary ones. Helleu had no trouble finding sitters in that world.

In 1891 Helleu spent some time with his wife at Bois-Boudran, the estate of Countess Greffulhe, the former Elizabeth de Caraman-Chimay, one of the great beauties of her age. He executed several portraits of the Countess in pastels and dry-point, but also executed dozens of drawings and drypoints of the garden, and of the peacocks strutting through the grounds. In the years to come his models were to include Grand Duchess Kyril of Russia, Princess Patricia of Connaught, the German Princess of Pless, Countess de Broglie, Lady Dudley, the Countess of San Martino, Countess Mathieu de Noailles who was a noted poet, assorted Duchesses, Countesses, and Princesses, as well as queens of stage and salon such as Cécile Sorel, Liane de Pougy and Madeleine Lemaire. He rarely executed portraits of men: the painter Boudin, seen fishing from a jetty, a drypoint portrait of Whistler described by Montesquiou as 'like a witty tiger cat, one eye open behind his monocle, the other glittering with malice', Edmond de Goncourt, Montesquiou, Rouart and Tissot. Princess Mathilde Bonaparte had introduced Helleu to Goncourt who later noted in his diary: 'Tissot has brought me Helleu who decidedly wants to make an etching of me.' He describes 'the painter Helleu, with feverish eyes, tormented features, and withall, skin and hair as black as a raven.'

Helleu exhibited in London in 1895. He was introduced to the Prince and Princess of Wales, who bought several of his drypoints, and commissioned him to execute a portrait of the Princess, later Queen Alexandra.

In 1885 Helleu met Marcel Proust at a gathering in Madeleine Lemaire's Salon. They became firm friends and Proust was later to base the character of the painter Elstir in his *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (Remembrance of Things Past) on Helleu. In his mobile days Proust liked to visit Helleu in his yacht. His final request of the artist was that he portray

Opposite

La Duchesse de Marlborough, Drypoint.



Madame Liane de Pougy, Drypoint coloured à la poupée.



Alice Helleu – le visage encadré/The Framed Face, Sanguine drypoint.

him on his death bed. In 1922 Helleu carried out that request, and executed a drypoint portrait of the profile of Proust shortly after his death.

In reply to Montesquiou, who was about to write an article about him, Helleu said: 'Tell them that at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts when I was fifteen years old I was the only one to love Manet and Monet and for that reason I had sixty fellow students baying at my heels. Now they all paint in violet but I do not.'

His taste was for the soberly elegant. Always dressed in black, he rejected strong colours and heavy furniture in his surroundings. His own house was carpeted in pearl grey, with white daybeds and Empire furniture. Silver and pewter objects, bronzes and eighteenth century wood carvings vied with white china vases or white porcelain statuettes on the white marble mantelpiece and furniture tops, surrounded by white silks and satins. A few of his pictures, some by his friends, and a number of beautifully carved and gilded frames hung on the walls, empty frames which he loved for their own beauty.

In 1900 Helleu met the Duchess of Marlborough, the former Consuelo Vanderbilt. She sat for him in London, at Blenheim Palace, and in Paris, and he executed a series of drypoint portraits of her, as well as many pastels and drawings. His favourite model remained, however, his wife Alice, described by Goncourt as 'the dear model who lends the elegant life of her body to all these compositions, being unable to make a single gesture that is not both graceful and elegant', and by Montesquiou as 'the multiform *Alice*, the reflection of whose red hair illuminates so many copper mirrors.' He executed

several hundred drypoints of his wife and children, normally refusing commissions depicting other people's children.

In 1904 he was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. His first visit to the United States in 1902 had led to a number of portrait commissions. His second, in 1912, again brought him a number of sitters, but also a very important commission; the painting of the ceiling of the Hall of Grand Central Station in New York, which he designed as a night sky, the dark blue surrounded by the signs of the Zodiac in gold with a silver milky way, while stars and planets, internally lit, glowed.

By the time Montesquiou wrote his book on Helleu in 1913, the artist had already executed over two thousand drypoints. Many were of his children, his son Jean, his daughters Ellen, Alice, who died in 1897 at the age of eighteen months when a runaway horse overturned her pram, and Paulette, the youngest. Montesquiou illustrated a number of the family drypoints and drawings, while others were illustrated in a book called *Nos Bébés* (Our Babies), published without text, and others still appeared in a little pamphlet called *Chansons Simplettes Pour les Petits Enfants* (Simple Songs for Little Children), published with some poems by Lucie Félix-Faure-Goyan by a manufacturer of a patented children's food.

Most of Helleu's drypoints were, however, of beautiful women headed, of course, by Madame Helleu. At home, in drawing rooms, art galleries, gardens or parks, he lightly indicated backgrounds suitable to the beautiful and elegant women he depicted. He became a master at transferring hair onto the copper plate: the most elaborate coiffures came alive



Le Manchon de fourrure/The Fur Muff. Drypoint.

on the plate, texture, shape, cut and colour holding no secrets from him. Many of his sitters are seen wearing hats, frequently with feathers, thus giving him the opportunity of contrasting the textures of skin, hair, fabric and feather. Goncourt called these drypoints 'les instantanés de la grâce de la femme' (snapshots of the gracefulness of women).

Some of Helleu's drypoints are in colour. He invariably used colour discreetly, sometimes only for a feather, to heighten hair, delicate complexion or eyes. Colour was applied *à la poupée*, the different coloured inks applied to the appropriate portion of the plate using a tampon (or dabber) called a 'poupée'. The plate was then wiped as normal, and printed. Since the printing of each proof required the individual inking of the plate, the result was frequent differences between each proof in colour. In any case, as most of Helleu's drypoints were printed in very small quantities, sometimes only in



Le Chapeau à plumes/The Feathered Hat. Drypoint coloured à la poupée.

editions of between two and ten proofs, such differences in colour as occurred made each individual proof unique.

After the 1914-1918 war Helleu found himself in a world he did not altogether understand or like. In the autumn of 1920 he made his third and last visit to the United States, where the Wildenstein Gallery in New York gave him an exhibition. Although such people as W. K. Vanderbilt and Whitney Warren had major collections of his drypoints, the exhibition did not lead to any substantial new commissions, and Helleu withdrew almost totally into family life. Shortly after his return from New York he destroyed nearly all his copper plates. On March 23rd, 1927 Helleu died of peritonitis. He had been preparing an exhibition which had been suggested by his friend Forain. The exhibition was held in 1931 at the Galerie Charpentier in Paris.

Opposite

Alice Helleu — La Robe relevée/The Gathered Dress. Drypoint.





LOUIS LEGRAND

(1863-1951)

Louis Legrand was a master of the aquatint technique. Born at Dijon on September 29th, 1863, he was employed as a bank clerk until he was twenty, though his desire to become an artist was such that he studied at the Dijon Ecole des Beaux-Arts in the evenings and in his spare time. In 1883 he won the Devosge Prize at the school, and left for Paris the following year.

Soon after his arrival in Paris Legrand began to study etching and engraving techniques with Félicien Rops. His first commission in 1884 was a set of four etchings for a series of volumes called *Les Premières Illustrées*, to which Steinlen and Willette later also contributed. The following year he executed eight etchings for a novel by Joseph Gayda, *Ce Brigand d'Amour* from the same publisher, E. Monnier. Clumsy and amateurish, these show little promise of what was to come. They were, however, the start of a long apprenticeship for Legrand. In the difficult years that followed he supplied a few drawings to such periodicals as *La Journée* and the *Journal Amusant*, but lived mostly on the revenue from drawings he executed for children's pulp magazines. In 1887 he joined the *Courrier Français* alongside Forain, Willette, Henri Pille and Heidbrinck, contributing a drawing to each weekly issue over the following five years. The publication expected cynical humour with erotic overtones. Legrand's drawings were rarely funny. Instead of supplying straightforward cartoons he supplied powerful drawings with strong, harsh lines emphasising the death and disease that awaited the prostitute and her client, rather than the fun and games. These drawings already showed Legrand's preoccupation: Rops pointed out that Legrand had 'un amour extraordinaire du modelé' (an extraordinary love for the sculptured) and in another remark said, 'What a man, that Legrand, he would find angles in a billiard ball.'

Prostitutes, errand girls, peasants, even political comment poured from Legrand's pen. Two drawings brought him trouble. One called *Prostitution*, was a mildly Ropsian bit of Symbolism showing a rather silly nude girl in the clutch of a black monster with an old woman's face and clawed paws. The other was an equally mild satire on the naturalism of Emile Zola, showing the novelist myopically examining a woman's thighs. Taken to court for obscenity, Legrand was defended by Eugène Rodriguès, a fine lawyer, friend and later biographer of Rops. He was acquitted, but the public prosecutor appealed and, despite Rodriguès' eloquence, Legrand was found guilty.

Opposite

Aux Folies/At the Folies, 1909. Drypoint.

Refusing to pay the fine, he was briefly incarcerated in the Sainte-Pélagie gaol. This spell in gaol convinced Legrand that the life of a satirical journalist was not for him. Though he lived in Montmartre he, like Steinlen, lived a bourgeois existence, enjoying the wit and humour of the Chat Noir without plunging into the debauched amusements that Toulouse-Lautrec and Bottini found so fascinating.

Rodriguès, who wrote articles and chronicles under the pseudonym Erastène Ramiro, had written a commentary on the cancan and its principal exponents, as well as details on the hard training those dancers had to undergo. The *Gil Blas* magazine published an illustrated supplement, the *Gil Blas Illustré* from May 1891 onwards, devoting its first two issues to the Rodriguès text with illustrations in colour by Legrand. An unprecedented 60,000 copies were printed and sold out immediately. Legrand's fame began to spread. The *Gil Blas* illustrations had been reproductions of watercolours. The publisher Dentu persuaded Legrand to etch these compositions, and these were issued the following year in a book called *Le Cours de Danse Fin de Siècle* (Turn of the Century Dance Classes) with a revised text by Ramiro.

Legrand had, in the meantime, gone to Brittany for a holiday which was to signal the break with his *Courrier Français* past. The last link was a set of seventeen etchings of subjects he had earlier drawn for the magazine. On his return he executed fourteen lithographs inspired by Brittany: fisher folk, peasants, market day. The set, called *Au Cap de la Chèvre* (At the Goat's Promontory) was published by Gustave Pellet.

Pellet was to be Legrand's friend and publisher for the rest of his life. Born in 1859, Pellet came from a wealthy family, and spent his youth and young manhood in travel and pursuing his hobby of accumulating a fine library. A financial crash in 1886 destroyed his family fortunes. Faced with the necessity of earning a living he opened a bookshop on the quai Voltaire and began dispersing his collection. He soon decided to diversify into pictures and graphics, and determined to publish original prints. His first artist was Louis Legrand, of whom he was to publish some three hundred etchings. He was also to publish Alexandre Lunois, Charles Maurin, Raffaelli and some of Toulouse-Lautrec's most beautiful colour lithographs, as well as many lithographs and etchings by Odilon Redon, Signac and Luce. When Rops sold the reproduction rights of his graphics shortly before his death, Pellet bought those rights and eventually published some four hundred Rops etchings, many of them engraved by Bertrand. Though highly successful as a publisher, Pellet was also a collector, and Legrand his favourite. It was said that the only place to see Legrand's pastels was in



A l'Ombre/In the Shade, 1905. Etching and drypoint.

Pellet's home, for the publisher could not bear to part with them, and bought nearly all for himself.

Legrand was principally a graphic artist, though he also painted, exhibiting paintings at the Salons of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts from 1902 onwards. After his Breton lithographs he hardly ever returned to the medium. His favourite was the aquatint, in monochrome or colour, which gave him all the flexibility he needed, with touches of etching, drypoint, roulette and burnishing to obtain luminous highlights and astonishing effects.

Many of Legrand's subjects are taken from Parisian night life, the bars, whorehouses, music-halls, but he also reveals a strange mystical streak which made him engrave a series of religious subjects. A large figure of Christ bore his own features, while a composition called *Le Fils du Charpentier* (The Carpenter's Son) showed his wife and son. Indeed, his wife and son were the models for many plates. The *Livre d'Heures* (Book of Hours) published by Pellet in 1898, was a compilation of prayers, songs of devotion, curious medieval texts, etchings and two hundred drawings which went from the conventionally devout to Ropsian demonology and to some very amusing illustrations. Several contemporary critics saw in him a Burgundian Primitive but his technique and sureness is far too sophisticated for that. He undoubtedly had a certain innocence of vision which occasionally dropped him on the wrong side of sentimentality, but that is largely because we are more cynical than his contemporaries.

After completing his series on the cancan Legrand turned to

the world of ballet. He spent a great deal of time in the wings and in the rehearsal rooms over a number of years, producing a number of individual aquatints, drawings and pastels as well as two major albums. The first was *Les Petites du Ballet* (The Little Ones of the Ballet), thirteen aquatints and a cover published in 1893. These showed the evolution of the would-be ballerinas, from timid arrival for the first lesson accompanied by a black-clad mother; through familiarity, companionship and hard exercise; to putting on and taking off their tutus and an appearance in a scene from an imaginary ballet. The second album appeared in 1908. *La Petite Classe* consisted of twelve large plates and a cover, dealing this time with the actual performers, from the very young girl wiser in the ways of stage-door johnnies than her years, to the rehearsal rooms, the girls unwinding before a performance, flirting, going to class, becoming a prima ballerina and, at last, making an entrance on stage. Legrand's ballet plates form a delicious body of work, in which the girls, however tired or tense, are never ungraceful whether sitting, standing, dressing, or at their exercises. Curiously enough Legrand never drew an actual performance. As with the cancan, it was the effort behind the performance that appealed to him.

Legrand's first major one-man show comprising two hundred works was held in 1896 at Samuel Bing's L'Art Nouveau gallery. Bing had been one of the leading dealers in Far Eastern works of art before transforming his gallery into one dealing in every aspect of fine and decorative arts in the style to which he gave the name. That same year Floury



Au bord de la mer/By the Seaside, 1905. Aquatint, etching and drypoint.

published a catalogue raisonné of Legrand's work to date, one hundred and twelve original etchings, aquatints and lithographs. It had been compiled and written by Ramiro, and Legrand had etched six new etchings for it, including a self-portrait for the cover which he dedicated 'to Eug. Rodriguès, my best friend'.

At the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris Legrand was awarded a Silver Medal. In 1904 a second important one-man show was held at the Galerie Georges Petit, where he exhibited sixteen paintings, twenty-eight pastels, sixty drawings, seven leather bindings, some miniatures and forty-nine etchings. Two years later he was awarded the Légion d'Honneur. In 1911 came a major retrospective exhibition, when his complete graphic works were shown at the Palais des Modes, while paintings, pastels and drawings were exhibited at the Durand-Ruel Gallery. Throughout this part of his career a vast number of articles were published praising his work from the pens of Roger Marx, Louis Morin, Clément-Janin, Michel Zévaco, Gustave Coquiot, Gabriel Mourey, Camille Mauclair and many others. The magazine *L'Art et le Beau* (Art and Beauty) devoted a complete issue to him in 1908, written by Gustave Kahn, which also appeared in a German edition published by Otto Beckmann Verlag in Berlin. Two years later Mauclair published a two hundred and seventy-four page monograph on Legrand which included a summary list of his graphic works to date.

Legrand continued to produce a number of books, though he only twice illustrated in the conventional sense: *Cinq Contes Parisiens* (Five Parisian Tales) by Guy de Maupassant in

1905 and *Quinze Histoires d'Edgar Poe* (Fifteen Stories by Edgar Poe) in 1897, the former commissioned by the Société des Cent Bibliophiles, of which Rodriguès was a founder and the president. In 1901 Pellet published *La Faune Parisienne* (Parisian Fauna), a set of twenty etchings and aquatints, mostly in colour, with a text by Ramiro. In 1904 he produced twenty-six etchings to illustrate some short stories by Hugues Rebelle, but these were never published. In 1909 Pellet issued a new album of eight etchings and a cover under the title *Les Bars*, in which Legrand returned to the scenes of dissipation. In 1914 Pellet published *Poèmes à L'Eau Forte* (Etched Poems), for which Legrand produced thirty etchings and aquatints to accompany some of his favourite poems.

The years that followed the war of 1914-1918 saw Legrand withdraw into his family. His old friend and publisher Pellet died in 1919, leaving his gallery to his son-in-law, Maurice Exsteens. Though the latter continued to exhibit Legrand's works, there was a gap of years between the two men. Exsteens was to write and publish a four volume catalogue of the works of Rops. His catalogue of the works of Legrand was never finished or published. Legrand continued to etch and draw, occasionally sending some paintings to the Salons of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. Though he had published drawings and etchings of the Moulin Rouge, of the cancan and of the girls of Montmartre before Lautrec, the latter's romantically brief and turbulent life had created a legend around his splendid works: even Legrand's admirers frequently ignored the fact that he was a precursor, not a follower of



Une Loge/A Box at the Theatre, 1910. Aquatint and drypoint.

Lautrec's. Pierre Varenne, writing in 1922, exclaimed: 'Life is the admirable Louis Legrand, one of the most moving artists of our time. One does not, perhaps, realise this enough. Since Toulouse-Lautrec no other painter has more faithfully described woman's complex soul . . . What mastery and tact!'

Legrand supplied a few etchings for a couple of books in the 1920s, but his last major undertaking was a series of forty-six etchings, aquatints and drawings to accompany a text in prose and verse entitled *Elles* describing various girls, which

Francis Carco had written especially for the purpose. The book was published in 1931 by another friend, Henri Prost.

The Depression was, however, taking its toll. The day of the limited edition book was over for many years. Legrand retired to the country, still occasionally producing some etchings, often of old friends. One of these unfinished etchings includes a caricature of Hitler, Joan of Arc, and an archbishop. He survived the Second World War, and died at Livry-Gargan in 1951 in total obscurity.

Opposite

Militaristes, 1901. Colour aquatint and drypoint.





Digestion, 1910. Drypoint and aquatint.

Au Bal/At the Ball, 1911. Etching, aquatint and drypoint.



Opposite
Robbe

Le Coquillage/The Seashell. Colour aquatint.







Opposite above
 Chahine
Le Promenoir/The Walkway. Colour etching and aquatint.

Petite Marcheuse/Little Tease, 1908.
 Drypoint, etching and aquatint.

Opposite below
 Lunois
Colin Maillard/Blind Man's Buff. Colour lithograph.



JULES CHERET

(1836-1933)

The eighteen nineties were the heyday of the artist's posters. The street became the common man's art gallery. New coloured placards appeared constantly in the streets of Paris, extolling everything from theatrical performances to toothpaste by such artists as Chéret, Grasset, Mucha, Toulouse-Lautrec, Steinlen, Ibels, Bonnard, Willette, de Feure. Equally colourful posters appeared in Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy, Great Britain and the United States. Easel and mural painters felt no shame at the thought of designing posters for commercial use, and many did, in fact, design posters. Part of this change of attitude was due to the *rapprochement* between the pure and applied arts which the Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau movements had brought about, led by such respected teachers and creators as Eugène Grasset. Much was due to the tenacity and success of Jules Chéret.

Chéret was born in Paris on May 31st, 1836, the son of a poor typographer with several children. At the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a lithographer (as was his brother Joseph), a three year apprenticeship which cost Chéret's father four hundred francs. The young Chéret spent his working time writing backwards to prepare the cards, invitations and notices which were all that was produced at that firm, and his Sundays at the Louvre Museum. At the end of his apprenticeship he joined a printing firm specialising in religious images, and enrolled at the National School of Drawing, which was later to become the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs. There he studied under Lecoq de Boisbaudran, who was also to teach Rodin and Puvis de Chavanne. The following few years were frustrating ones for Chéret. He tried a provincial firm for a while then returned to Paris, working for a number of printing firms, occasionally selling little typographical designs or ornamental lettering to music and book publishers. At the age of eighteen he went to London to make his fortune, but at the end of six months he had only managed to get a job illustrating furniture for a Maples catalogue. Back in Paris he shared a small attic room with his brother Joseph, where they alternated each night between the bed and the floor.

The hoardings and walls of Paris and London were everywhere covered with printed posters. These were almost entirely letterpress, the very occasional pictorial ones generally consisting of a small woodcut illustration with much text. Chéret was convinced that the future would see an expansion

of the pictorial poster. His difficulty lay in persuading advertisers of this.

Success appeared to beckon in 1858, when Chéret met Jacques Offenbach, who wanted a poster to advertise his new operetta, *Orphée aux Enfers* (Orpheus in Hades). Chéret executed a green and black poster which was printed at Lemercier's firm. Unfortunately no further commissions came his way, and Chéret decided to try London again.

Colour lithography was both more advanced and more prevalent in England than in France. Chéret was soon familiar with all the new technical advances, and was soon engaged on the usual jobbing lithographer's tasks. He was fascinated by the circus, and became friendly with a family of clowns, for whom he designed a poster. This was to be the turning point of his life. A Breton chemist called Le Maou, who had written a poem on perfumes, saw the poster, liked it and asked Chéret to illustrate his poem. He then introduced the young artist to Eugène Rimmel, the famous perfume and cosmetics manufacturer, who had factories in Paris and London. A notable philanthropist, he founded the French Hospital in London. Rimmel liked Chéret, and commissioned him to design labels for his perfume bottles. He became Chéret's patron, and took him on his travels through Europe and North Africa.

Chéret remained with Rimmel for several years. He acquired much practical experience both in design and in commercial practice, but his dream of pictorial placards never left him. When Chéret was thirty years old Rimmel financed the setting up of a printing firm in Paris. Chéret brought over the latest machines from England, and had large lithographic stones made especially for him.

Early pictorial posters tended to be blown up versions of drawings, lithographs or book illustrations with the addition of some lettering. Lithographic caricaturists such as Daumier and Gavarni had several of their prints transformed into posters. Well known illustrators and painters such as Grandville, Achille Devéria, Celestin Nanteuil, Grévin and Meissonier also had works of theirs transformed into posters. Charles Hiatt, one of the earliest English historians of the poster, wrote in 1898 in admiration of a poster illustrating Champfleury's book *Les Chats*, which he described as 'instinct with originality'. The central illustration was by Edouard Manet, and Hiatt, who obviously thought that Manet had designed the poster, concluded that the artist was a pioneer of the illustrated poster movement. Several English and American writers on the history of the poster have made the same mistake. Manet had, in fact, supplied an etched illustration for the second edition of *Les Chats*, published in 1870. The publisher, J. Rothschild,

Opposite

Quinquina Dubonnet, 1895.

Colour lithograph poster before the letters.



*Exposition de Willette/
One-Man-Show by Willette, 1888.
Colour lithograph poster.*



*Fête des fleurs/
Flower Festival, 1890.
Colour lithograph poster.*



*Taverne Olympia, 1899.
Colour lithograph poster.*

wanted a poster to advertise this second, illustrated edition. Manet supplied him with a lithograph he had executed in 1868, and Rothschild had the lettering added to the reproduction of that lithograph.

The first illustrated poster Chéret produced in his new printing works in the rue Brumel was *La Biche au Bois* (The Doe in the Wood) in black with tone, closely followed by his first poster in colour, advertising a dance hall, the Bal Valentino. Both appeared in 1866.

Between 1866 and 1881 Chéret perfected his style and technique, executing a vast number of posters in colour and in black. He had fallen under the spell of Watteau and Fragonard in the Louvre; he had discovered the beauty of colour in Turner's works in London; and been overwhelmed by the movement and composition of Tiepolo's frescoes in Italy. All these somehow combined with his practical knowledge of the possibilities of commercial lithography to produce an unending stream of gay and colourful posters which transformed every wall and hoarding. Disciples and imitators soon flourished.

Chéret was awarded a Silver Medal at the 1878 Paris Exhibition. Three years later he sold his printing works to the Imprimerie Chaix, and moved into their large works in the rue Bergère as artistic director. By the turn of the century he had produced over one thousand posters. His brother Joseph also achieved fame as a sculptor and designer of ceramics and bronzes. Joseph's early death was followed by an astonishing posthumous success as several of his Art Nouveau designs for bronzes and light fittings were issued by his editor and his widow.

1889 was a triumphal year for Chéret. An exhibition of his posters, preparatory drawings, watercolours and pastels was held at the Théâtre d'Application in the rue Saint-Lazare, later to be known as 'La Bodinière'. The most eminent critics and men of letters, headed by Huysmans and Roger Marx, set their seal of approval on his popular success. Chéret had made the pictorial poster a more than acceptable field for the artists who were to follow in the next decade. At the 1889 International Exhibition he was awarded a Gold Medal; while a

petition signed by established artists such as Dalou, Falguière, Roll, Barrias; young lions like Rodin; men of letters like Daudet and Goncourt and of music like Massenet, Meilhac and Halévy, as well as a host of admirers, appealed to the Government for a decoration for him. In 1890 he was made Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur with a citation which called him 'creator of an art industry since 1866 by the application of art to commercial and industrial printing: exceptional titles.' He was later to be promoted to Officer in 1900, Commander in 1910 and Grand Officer, the highest rank, in 1926. He was awarded a Grand Prix at the Universal Exhibition in 1900.

Chéret devoted his mornings to drawing from the model. These were mostly drawings in pencil and chalk or sanguine crayon. His favourite model was a pert and pretty Danish actress, Charlotte Wiehe. The afternoons were spent in his large studio at the Chaix works, surrounded by reproductions of Tiepolo, Donatello, Fragonard, Houdon, Velasquez, Correggio, Watteau and Degas; original works by Rodin and Albert Besnard; mouldings of limbs taken from life, particularly those of the Javanese dancers who had appeared at the 1889 Exhibition and for whom he had executed a poster; a portrait bronze of Loïe Fuller; and dominating the room a portrait bust of his benefactor Rimmel by Carrier-Belleuse, who had become Joseph Chéret's father-in-law after being his teacher. Chéret would skip from his easel, on which he painted his oils, to a table on which he executed his pastels, then would sprawl on the floor, half resting on his great lithographic stones placed on trestles. He worked with four stones for each colour poster: one for the blue, one for the yellow, one for the red, the fourth for transparent tints. Mixing them with consummate skill he achieved an astonishing chromatic range; he early abandoned the use of black, retaining it almost exclusively for his black and white posters, preferring blue for his outlines. His daring use of colour was not that of a painter but of a graphic artist who understood his medium in a way that no easel painter had yet succeeded in penetrating, achieving his effects with the sparest means, knowing that his clients wished to keep costs down, and that his works would be printed on

cheap pulp paper.

Nearly all Chéret posters depict a gay, pretty, lively girl. He never based these girls on living models. His morning drawings were exercises, designed to capture the illusion of movement. His creations were a synthesis of the movements he observed; and they formed the archetypal girl known as the 'Cherette', a girl so popular that real girls copied her dress and style, and collectors pursued her image for their portfolios. A very few of his posters dealt with tragic or dramatic events – these were generally posters for melodramatic popular novels, often serialised. The majority were gay splashes of colour. 'There are enough people depicting the sadness, pain and betrayals of life,' he said. 'I know them, but do not wish to paint them. There are the joys – I have pink and blue pencils for them.'

His posters cover the whole spectrum of the theatre and night life of Paris, the music-halls, the popular dance halls, the cafés. His posters for Loïe Fuller, the American dancer, are among his most exciting. He advertised lamp oil, drink, skating rinks, cookers and patent medicines – the Pastilles Giraudel, a cough drop, was advertised in a set of twenty different posters by him. All have a nervous vitality, the characters in perpetual frozen movement, limbs flung in reckless abandon, yet built up into an almost architectural grouping. He executed a bare handful of lithographed decorative panels, but his posters – especially those showing only his basic designs before the letters had been added, often by other craftsmen, were frequently used to decorate not only offices and workrooms, but home walls as well.

Chéret did not exhibit at the major annual Salons, and worked through no dealer, though the ubiquitous Sagot retailed some of his works around the turn of the century. He sent a few works to the Society of Pastellists, the Society of Humourists, the occasional international exhibition or the Salon d'Automne. The majority of his easel paintings, pastels and drawings were bought by his friends and a few patrons. The most important of these was the Baron Joseph Vitta, who purchased an enormous collection of Chéret's works, and also commissioned him to paint his first murals for Vitta's villa at Evian, for which Bracquemond designed the decorative mouldings, Alexandre Charpentier designed the furniture, Albert Besnard painted ceilings and Rodin supplied carvings. Chéret painted some of the furniture for Vitta, as well as modelling clocks, vases and bowls which were then carved in marble, and also painted some porcelain plaques and plates. For his second biggest collector, Maurice Fenaille, he painted murals for his dining room and designed a series of tapestries which were executed at the Gobelins works. Chéret painted several more murals, including some for the Paris town hall, as well as a curtain for the theatre in the Grévin Wax Museum, for which he had already executed a poster.

Chéret had just about abandoned the poster by 1900, and concentrated thereafter on pastels and paintings. In 1912 he was honoured by the Louvre Museum with a retrospective exhibition at the Pavillon de Marsan. He later retired to Nice, where he died in 1933 at the age of ninety-seven. Shortly before his death, a Jules Chéret Museum was opened in Nice as a Fine Arts Museum in 1927. The Baron Vitta and Maurice Fenaille both gave their collections to the Museum, which thus has the major part of Chéret's works, though unfortunately only a small part of it is ever on view. Another fine Chéret collection hangs in the Hermitage Museum in Russia.



Grand Théâtre de l'Exposition/Exhibition Theatre.
Colour lithograph poster.

CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

Jardin de Paris

DIRECTEUR CH ZIDLER

Speclacle Concert
FETE DE NUIT BAL
Les MARDIS MERCREDIS VENDREDIS & SAMEDIS

Jardin de Paris, 1890. Colour lithograph poster.



Farandole. Lithograph.



La Loïe Fuller aux Folies-Bergère, 1893.
Colour lithograph poster.

Opposite
Chéret
Olympia, 1892. Colour lithograph poster.

Page 46
Chéret
Le Courrier Français, 1891. Colour lithograph poster.
Page 47
Chéret
La Pantomime, 1891. Colour lithograph.
One of a set of four decorative panels.



Olympia

anciennes

MONTAGNES RUSSES

Boulevard des Capucines

Chérel





Phérel

THÉÂTROPHONE



PAPIER A CIGARETTES



Opposite
Chéret
Le Théâtrophone, 1890. Colour lithograph poster.

Papier à cigarettes Job/Job Cigarette Papers, 1895.
Colour lithograph poster.



Le Lin/Spinning Flax, 1900. Colour lithograph decorative panel.



Palais de Glace/Ice Skating Rink, 1896. Colour lithograph poster.

MOTHU et DORIA

SCÈNES
IMPRESSIONNISTES

Steinlen

PAJOLAC Éditeurs 27 Rue Basse

THEOPHILE-ALEXANDRE STEINLEN

(1859-1923)

COLLEGE LIBRARY
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
CARNARVON ROAD
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA, ESSEX

Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, born in Lausanne on November 10th, 1859 was to become the truest celebrator of Montmartre. Although his father was a postal clerk, his grandfather had taught drawing at Vevey, while all nine of his uncles drew, one of them being an enameller in Paris, where he worked in Charles Gleyre's studio, and another a fabric designer and manufacturer at Mulhouse in Alsace. Although an erratic student at the Lausanne Academy he early showed a ready wit and a great love of drawing. At the age of eighteen he went to Mulhouse, where he spent some three years as an industrial designer of fabrics. He met and married a girl called Emilie and fell under the spell of Emile Zola's bitterly naturalistic novels. Encouraged by a friend, Steinlen and his wife left for Paris in 1881, moving into a small house at 2 rue Ménessier in Montmartre, then a small hilltop village with a superb view across Paris. One of his first friends there was Adolphe Willette, who soon introduced him to Rodolphe Salis.

Salis was an extravagant showman, who was to boast that 'God made the world, Napoleon set up the Legion of Honour, and I created Montmartre.' He was in the process of setting up a new nightclub, the Chat Noir, and had commissioned a fellow Swiss, Eugène Grasset, to design a large fireplace replete with snarling cats and a large swinging lantern that was to become one of the landmarks of the area. Steinlen was having difficulty getting work as a fabric designer so Salis, always willing to help a fellow Swiss, commissioned him to execute some drawings of cats to scatter throughout the Chat Noir.

The Chat Noir soon became the regular meeting place of artists, composers and writers. Over the years Steinlen met there Forain, Toulouse-Lautrec, Félix Vallotton, Henri Pille and Caran d'Ache as well as the poet Verlaine, the song writers Paul Delmet and Aristide Bruant and the members of the Club des Hydropathes (The Club of Water-Haters), headed by Alphonse Allais, writer of extraordinary and witty short stories.

In 1882 Salis launched a new magazine called *Le Chat Noir*. The 8th issue, dated 1st September, reproduced a drawing by Steinlen, *L'Été* (Summer). The following year the magazine began regularly publishing little fables drawn by Steinlen without captions under such titles as *How Love Comes To Cats*, *Horrible End Of A Goldfish*, *Since they will not allow themselves to be eaten, let us 'suicide' them* or *The Vengeful Nail*. Most dealt with cats, and these became enormously popular.

Many were later published in two anthologies, *Des Chats*

(Some Cats) published in 1898 and *Contes à Sarah* (Tales for Sarah) published in 1899 and dedicated to Sarah Salis. Steinlen supplied *Le Chat Noir* with large numbers of drawings until 1891, then supplied several more drawings to the magazine when it reappeared in 1895 under the editorship of Jules Levy.

The great success of the Chat Noir persuaded Salis to move to larger premises, and in 1885 he led a great parade of friends and patrons with music and singing through the streets to 12 rue Laval, a former home of Alfred Stevens. Steinlen helped decorate the new premises, painting a large mural entitled *The Cat's Apotheosis*, and more cats on the chimney and on the walls. The vacated premises were taken over by Aristide Bruant, the poet and song-writer, who reopened the place under the name of Le Mirliton. In October 1885 Bruant began the publication of a magazine of the same name. Steinlen and Toulouse-Lautrec both supplied drawings for many issues, Lautrec under the name of 'Treclau' (an anagram of his name) and Steinlen under the name of 'Jean Caillou' (i.e. John Pebble, a play on his own name, 'stein' being stone in German, 'len' being a diminutive, hence little stone, or pebble). The recent relaxation of censorship allowed journalists much greater latitude. As a result politically motivated magazines proliferated. Steinlen had found a platform on which to air his views. A committed Socialist as well as anti-clerical, he was nevertheless far more interested in redressing wrongs than in sterile polemics. His drawings therefore exposed poverty, neglect, and injustice wherever he saw it.

1885 marks the date of his earliest posters, fairly uninteresting ones in the first few years, advertising seaside resorts, copper cleaners, rat poison, a bakery and cough pastilles, not all of them signed. He supplied illustrations for song covers and illustrated books and plays. He also supplied drawings to a whole series of other magazines, including *Le Croquis*, *La Revue Illustrée*, *L'Illustration*, *La Gazette des Chasseurs*, *La Caricature*, *Le Rire*, *Le Canard Sauvage*, *Le Chambard Socialiste*, *La Feuille*, *L'Echo de Paris*. The songs of Bruant were eventually to be published in four volumes, crammed with drawings by Steinlen, some from *Le Mirliton* plus many new ones.

In 1890 the Steinlens moved to a new home at 58 rue Caulaincourt, a one-storey house with a garden which he named Cat's Cottage. Steinlen's passion for cats meant that every stray in Montmartre could find a refuge in his home. Even the design he chose as his studio stamp is an 'S' in the shape of a cat. The following year he began his long collaboration with the *Gil Blas Illustré*, issued as an illustrated supple-

Mothu et Doria, 1893. Colour lithograph poster.



Les Cyclistes, 1889. Lithograph.

ment to the magazine *Gil Blas*. Launched with two issues on the cancan with drawings by Louis Legrand, the magazine was to publish over four hundred drawings by Steinlen between 1891 and 1900. His drawings ranged over an extremely wide field, from political and social comment to illustrations for short stories, novels and songs; more of his stories without words; cartoons with witty titles and punchlines, some of which were anthologised. He was so prolific, indeed, that he occasionally used the same drawing in different publications with different punchlines.

In 1889 Steinlen began experimenting with lithography. His first lithograph was *Les Cyclistes* (The Cyclists), a large and crowded composition showing a traffic jam on the way back from the races involving horse-drawn vehicles, all kinds of cars, bicycles, tandems and other indescribable vehicles and contraptions. Commissioned from Steinlen to accompany a special issue of a magazine dealing with cycling, the issue was never published and neither was the lithograph, of which only a handful was ever printed. He only executed two lithographs in the following two years, but in 1893 he began a series of thirty lithographs dealing with socio-political subjects. Signed P.P. or Petit Pierre (another play on his name, meaning Little Stone), these were published in editions of one hundred each by the editor E. Kleinmann, who was also to publish a number of other lithographs by him. All thirty of these powerful and searing indictments of society, the military and the politicians were reproduced in various issues of the magazine *Le Chambard*. 1893 was also the date of the first of his posters in his mature style: *Mothu et Doria*, a fine lithograph in colour

advertising two actors specialising in short sketches and imitations. The following year, however, the artist Henri Rivière introduced Steinlen to Charles Verneau, a superb lithographic printer who was to print most of his future lithographs. Their first collaboration was for a poster for *Lait Pur Stérilisé de la Vingeanne*, which was commissioned by a provincial dairy, Quillot Frères. This charming poster showed his little daughter Colette drinking a bowl of milk while three cats look on enviously. It became so popular that a smaller version of the poster was issued in England for Nestlé's Milk. Colette and the cats were to reappear often in Steinlen's graphic works. His poster for the *Compagnie Française des Chocolats et des Thés* (1895) showed Colette, Mme Steinlen and one of the cats. The poster for his first major exhibition, held at the Théâtre de la Bodinière in 1894, showed two of the cats, a composition that again proved so popular that many reproductions in silk-screen on linen and other fabrics were made.

A curious sort of rivalry existed between Steinlen and Toulouse-Lautrec, erstwhile collaborators on *Le Mirliton*. To Lautrec's annoyance Bruant had chosen Steinlen to illustrate his songs, both in the magazine and in the later book publication. To Steinlen's even greater annoyance Bruant had chosen Lautrec to design his posters, a task he was to carry out three times. The rivalry again broke out over the commission for a poster for Yvette Guilbert, the singer. Both artists submitted sketches and Guilbert, who felt that Lautrec had made her look ugly, chose Steinlen. His poster appeared in 1894.

Two years later Steinlen executed an enormous poster, *La Rue*, advertising Charles Verneau's printing works. It is a strik-

ing composition showing a cross-section of the era, a mother with her baby, a laundry girl, some workmen, a notary, a couple of elegant women shoppers, a milliner's assistant and, in the centre, a nanny holding the hand of Colette. A pair to this poster, to be called *Le Boulevard* was discussed, but never executed. That same year he produced a poster for a provincial tour by Rodolphe Salis' Chat Noir company. This showed a black, sinister, hieratic cat on a red slab. The Chat Noir closed down in 1892, and the poster was adapted to advertise the sale by auction of the contents.

Paintings, drawings and lithographs flowed unceasingly from Steinlen. In 1893 he began exhibiting regularly at the Salon des Indépendants. The following year came his first one-man show at the Bodinière. A few months later he was invited to Munich by Langen, who was about to launch the magazine *Simplicissimus*. A great admirer of his illustrations for the *Gil Blas Illustré*, Langen sought Steinlen's suggestions. From Munich Steinlen travelled to England, thence to Norway and Holland before returning to Paris, sketching ideas everywhere he went which he later worked into paintings and graphics. In 1896 he returned to Switzerland, taking a two month holiday in Lausanne with his wife and daughter.

In January 1898 Steinlen executed his first drypoints and etchings. Using zinc plates, he began with multiple sketches, then did various portraits of women, a hat-maker's delivery girl, an apprentice, a whore, nudes, cats. He spent hours every day with his friend Eugène Delâtre, exploring techniques and methods. Delâtre was to print all of Steinlen's oeuvre in intaglio, which included soft-ground etching and aquatint in black, sanguine and ravishing colours. He also executed several monotypes. Between 1901 and 1905 he contributed a large number of drawings to *L'Assiette au Beurre*, an illustrated magazine which also featured such established artists as Ibels, Jossot, Hermann-Paul and Félix Vallotton, as well as three very young ones, Van Dongen, Juan Gris and Jacques Villon.

Shortly after being granted French citizenship in 1901, Steinlen illustrated Anatole France's novel *L'Affaire Crainquebille*. The novelist had long admired the artist. When Steinlen held a major one-man exhibition at the Pelletan gallery in 1903, France wrote the introduction to the catalogue. 'A subtle sensitivity, lively and attentive, the eye's infallible memory, and a rapid means of expression destined Steinlen to become the recorder and painter of passing life, the master of the street,' he wrote. 'The clear morning flow and the dark evening flow of workers, men and women, the groups seated at tables on the pavement which the landlord dubs the terrace, the prowlers of the black boulevards, the street itself, the public squares, the far suburbs with their scrawny trees, the vacant lots, all these belong to him. He knows everything about them. Their life is his life, their joy his joy, their sadness his sadness. He has suffered and laughed with the passers-by. The soul of the irritated or joyous crowd has entered him. He has felt both its terrible simplicity and its grandeur. And that is why the works of Steinlen are epic.'

In 1907 Ernest de Crauzat, an old friend, introduced Steinlen to Emile Morel, who had just written *Les Gueules Noires* (The Black Mugs) about the hard, harsh life of the miners in the Nord district. Steinlen spent some time living with the miners, illustrated Morel's book and painted several pictures there. Two years later the Salon d'Automne gave him



Ambassadeurs – Yvette Guilbert, Tous les soirs.
Colour lithograph poster.

a room to himself, while two shows were held at the Le Garrec and Pelletan galleries. In 1910 his wife died, and his model Masseida, a beautiful black girl, moved in with him. Three years later a thorough catalogue raisonné of his graphic works and illustrations, written by de Crauzat, was published.

With the outbreak of war, Steinlen travelled to the front several times, producing a series of war lithographs, posters and etchings, which he exhibited at the La Boétie gallery in 1917, as well as a series of drawings which were published in a special issue of *L'Art et Les Artistes* in 1918. After the war he produced a series of lovely etchings and aquatints of nudes.

On leaving Cat's Cottage, he had moved down the street to number seventy-three. The redevelopment of Montmartre chased him away for some two years, spent in the fashionable Porte Maillot district, a period he called his 'exile'. He returned to Montmartre as soon as he could, moving into twenty-one rue Caulaincourt, Toulouse-Lautrec's old studio. He died on December 14th, 1923.



A la Bodinière – Exposition Steinlen, 1894. Colour lithograph poster.

*Opposite
Steinlen
Motocycles Comiot, 1899. Colour lithograph poster.*

Motocycles COMIOT



Paris
87 Boulevard
Gouvion St Cyr

IMPRIMERIE VERNEAU 714 Rue Oberkampf Paris

Stemler

Lait pur de la Viergeanne Stérilisé



Quillot frères
Montigny sur Viergeanne
Côte d'Or



Opposite
Steinlen
Lait pur stérilisé de la Vingeanne, 1894. Colour lithograph poster.

Compagnie Française des Chocolats et des Thés, 1896.
Colour lithograph poster.

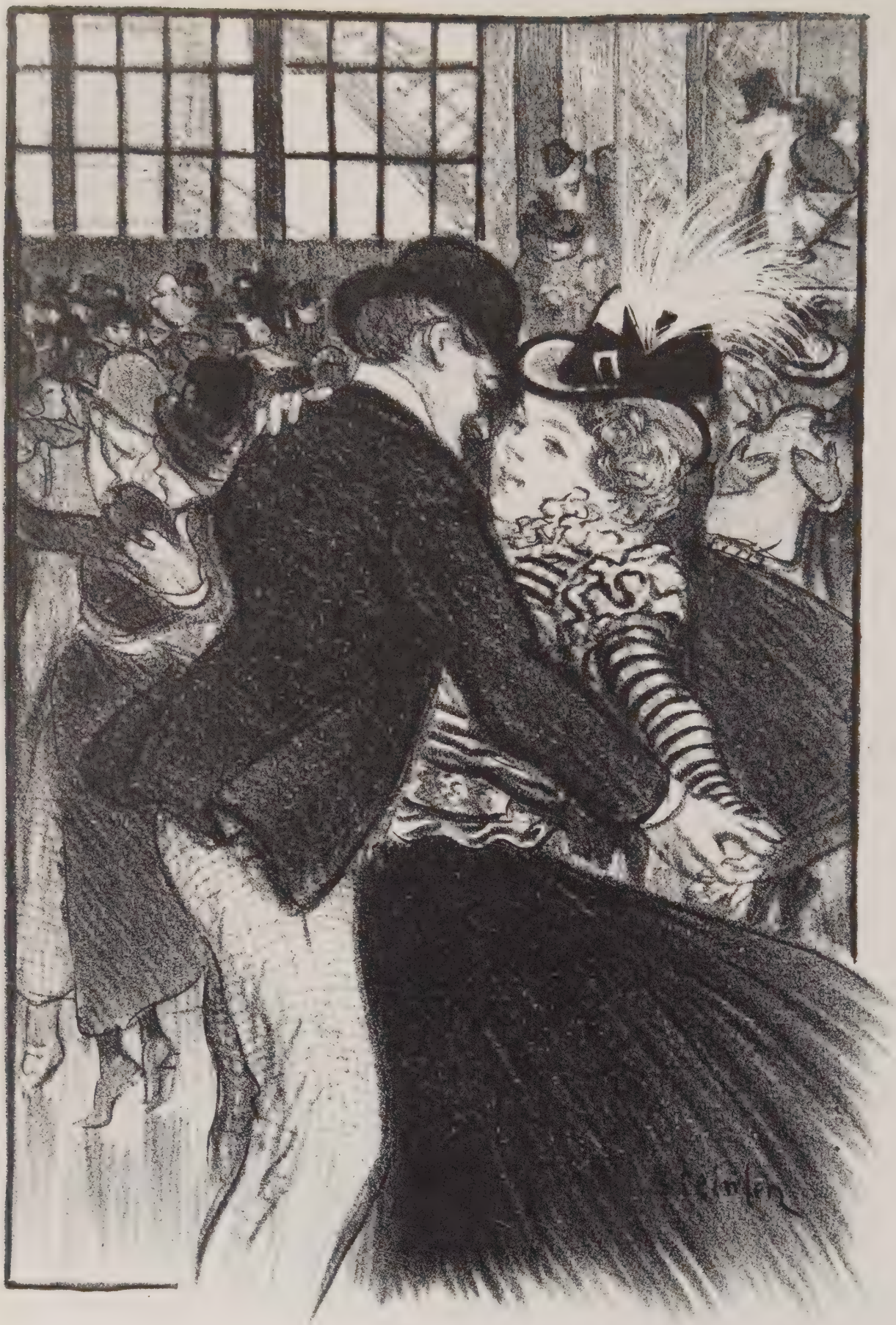




Opposite

Envoi de fleurs/Sending Flowers, 1899.
Lithograph song illustration.

Blanchisseuses reportant l'ouvrage/
Laundresses bringing back the wash, 1898.
Drypoint, aquatint and etching in colour.



J'ai voulu fuir/I Wanted to Flee, 1899. Lithograph song illustration.



Folie d'amour/Raptures of Love, 1899. Lithograph.



L'Eclatante, 1895. Colour lithograph poster.

MANUEL ROBBE

(1872-1936)

In 1881 Edmond Sagot opened a gallery in Paris and began exhibiting and publishing original graphics. He published editions of one or two steel-faced drypoints by Helleu, but his leading artists shortly before the turn of the century were Jacques Villon (1875-1963) and Manuel Robbe. Villon produced his first etchings for Sagot in 1899, engraving a number of interior and exterior scenes showing elegant women of Society or children at play. He also produced a very small number of posters and provided illustrations for a number of satirical and humorous magazines. His technical control was extraordinary, and he extended the possibilities of the aquatint to obtain an unlimited range of effects. In 1912 he executed his first Cubist plates, a style which affected all his subsequent original work. In 1919 he etched a series of striking plates after interiors by Sue et Mare for the publication *Architecture*; a little later he was commissioned by Bernheim-Jeune to engrave a series of aquatints in colour after a number of modern paintings by Marie Laurencin, Dufy, Picasso, Bonnard, Cézanne, Derain, Othon Friesz, Marquet, Matisse, Renoir and others. These turned out to be superb interpretations and original works of art in their own right, and are greatly sought after. His later work, though often interesting and always technically proficient, tends to be somewhat dry and didactic.

Manuel Robbe, on the other hand is a somewhat shadowy and little known artist today. Born in Paris on December 16th, 1872, he was descended from a northern French family from the town of Béthune. He studied painting and etching, and soon became an accomplished engraver, specialising in the aquatint. He exhibited regularly at the Salons of the Société des Artistes Français. He was to join Sagot in 1898.

Between then and the outbreak of war in 1914 Robbe executed a large number of aquatints in colour and in black, generally in small editions of thirty-five or forty, even the more popular subjects going only to editions of sixty or sixty-five.

A design is produced in etching or drypoint with lines. Shadows and dark areas are produced by cross-hatching lines, giving the illusion of darkness. Aquatint is necessary to produce actual areas of solid black or colour. As its name suggests, it is a method of producing a tint with the use of acid (aqua fortis in Latin). This process involves laying a fine film of resin powder over the metal plate, often by shaking the resin over the plate out of a finely meshed gauze bag, though there are many other ways to do this. The plate is then heated over a low flame, which melts the resin into the polished surface of the plate, thus pitting it evenly. The design is then

created using a brush and varnish. Those portions of the composition that are to remain white are painted on with varnish and the plate laid in an acid bath. The acid eats away those sections of the metal plate not covered by the varnish. The process is repeated to obtain greys, and finally blacks, by taking the plate out of the acid bath, varnishing those sections desired in grey, and replacing the plate in the acid, repeating this action as each section becomes capable of producing a darker shade. Thus when the plate is inked for printing, the first section, untouched by the acid, will not retain any ink and will print white. The rest, affected more or less by the acid, depending on the length of exposure to the acid before being covered by varnish, will retain varying quantities of ink when wiped: the longer the exposure to acid, the deeper the erosion and thus the more ink retained. The earlier pitting is designed to give the plate surface a corrugation (or 'teeth') which will retain the ink. It was normal for artists to lightly etch in the basic outlines of their design on the metal plate before the printing process. The outlines could still be seen through the pitted surface, and thus guided the location of the brush strokes. Goya, in his *Por Que Fue Sensible*, one of the plates from the *Caprichos*, produced a design entirely in aquatint, with no etched lines to guide or complete the design. Few artists have attempted such a tour-de-force.

Most of Manuel Robbe's plates were executed in a variation of the above, the sugar aquatint. He would paint his subject on the polished zinc plate using a brush and a solution of sugar, gamboge or gum arabic and gouache or india ink in water. As soon as it dried, the plate was covered entirely with a varnish. As soon as the varnish dried it was placed in a water bath. Sugar and gamboge, like glycerine and gum arabic in similar circumstances, do not dry completely. Thus the varnish laid over the drawn section will remain porous; once immersed, water will penetrate the porous sections of varnish, swell them and lift the varnish, thus exposing the design. An aquatint ground is then applied with resin and the pitted plate placed in an acid bath to etch the design onto the plate. The same process was repeated several times in order to obtain additional tones.

Since the artist has to start with whites and work down to obtain blacks, sugar aquatint enables the artist to etch that which he draws directly on to the plate, unlike normal aquatint, which works like a negative, Robbe worked with considerable freedom, painting his subjects directly.

Finishing touches were added to the plate with occasional drypoint lines. They were then printed. Robbe generally worked in colour, only occasionally producing plates in black. Black was, nevertheless, very important to him, and his blacks



Le Bahut/The Sideboard, 1899.
Colour drypoint with aquatint.



Le Choix de l'estampe/Choosing a print, 1900.
Colour aquatint.

are invariably rich and extensive, used in fact as a real colour. One of Robbe's great admirers was Gabriel Mourey, French correspondent and editor of *The Studio*, who took every opportunity of bringing Robbe's works to the attention of his readers. In an article on Robbe published in *The Studio* in December 1902 Mourey wrote: 'The subjects even, trivial in themselves, have a charm of their own. But it is the scheme of colouring which more especially delights the eye and holds our attention. Thus he excels, for instance, in producing a vibrant effect of every tone of white by skilful contrast, and by curious, hard wiping which brings up the grain of the paper, making it velvety or silvery, misty, grey and mysterious, and he thus produces a richness of surface rarely seen in an engraving – even in an engraving in colour. I am also particularly fascinated by his rich black, of velvety surface with undertones of iridescent quality – golden brown, deep blue, gleaming green; and, as he prints off his own plates, he obtains effects of the most subtle quality and refinement by bringing out these deep chords of colour, especially in his interiors.'

Robbe delighted in depicting women. These were not, however, the aristocratic women depicted by Helleu or Villon. Many of Robbe's women came from the bourgeoisie. He delighted in depicting them in their everyday pursuits, frequently playing with children. Several aquatints show women at the artist's studio, at Sagot's gallery or at an exhibition, looking through a portfolio of prints, admiring, criticising

choosing. Robbe also depicted the demi-mondaines, walking through the Place Blanche, sitting at café tables, at their make-up table, in their deshabillé, or, occasionally, languidly nude. A couple of aquatints show a girl at her dressing table looking into a handmirror in which her lover is reflected.

Robbe's prints, like Helleu's, are intended for framing and hanging on the walls. Whereas Helleu's are suitable because of their extreme simplicity and clarity of line against a large white area, Robbe's derive their impact from their similarity to oil paintings. Robbe worked with carefully built up masses of colour which form the silhouettes of his subjects. Hat, hair, dress, become the person to an extent that often made his critics believe he was either careless or technically incompetent in his detail. When he chose to, however, Robbe could produce a hard-edged, finished etching as technically proficient as anyone. It is clear he chose not to do so in many of his plates.

The result is often close to an impressionist painting; indeed, some of his models' generous attributes would also have appealed to Renoir.

In addition to his feminine subjects Robbe also executed a number of landscapes, including some of trains puffing over bridges. He was obviously prolific, with great technical ability. Sagot marketed a series of landscapes in colour aquatint by Robbe under the pseudonym 'A. Lafitte'.

In 1900 Manuel Robbe was awarded a Gold Medal at the Universal Exhibition for his prints. In 1905 he transferred his



Le Thé/Tea, 1900. Colour aquatint.

allegiance from the Société des Artistes Français to the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, in whose annual Salons he was henceforth to exhibit.

Gabriel Mourey points out in his article that Robbe printed his own aquatints. This was largely true. He had set up a fully equipped set of printing presses in his studio, where he experimented extensively with tones and colours. Nevertheless many of his prints were also printed at the atelier of Eugène Delâtre. Delâtre was himself an etcher of note. He and Charles Maurin had been the first to explore the field of etchings printed in colour. His own prints are technically superb. His subjects are mainly landscapes and townscapes, seeking night and snow effects in colour. His father, Auguste Delâtre, had been one of the leading printers of graphics of his generation. The son was to become equally admired as a printer for his own generation. Robbe and Delâtre were good friends, and undoubtedly shared the results of their experiments.

At the outbreak of war in 1914 Manuel Robbe enlisted. He became a pilot, and was involved in a number of actions. The post war period, however, was not to prove easy for him. There was no longer a demand for his type of graphics, and he apparently could not develop a style to suit the publishers of his day. He therefore set up his studio as a printing studio, and specialised in printing the works of other artists. He also executed many interpretative prints, aquatints in colour reproducing popular paintings. These were done to order. His former colleague at Sagot's, Jacques Villon, was also engaged in a similar occupation, though Villon had the luck to be commissioned to work with rather better artists than Robbe.

Several decorative artists of the twenties and thirties had their colour etchings printed by Robbe, including Louis Icart. Robbe initiated his son into the techniques of colour printing. After Robbe's death in 1936 his son continued to maintain the printing atelier.



Le Maquillage/Makeup. Monochrome aquatint.



La Belle épreuve/The Fine Proof, Aquatint with drypoint in colour.



Un Couple. Etching.

EDGAR CHAHINE

(1874-1947)

Chahine, like Manuel Robbe, was more at home with the bourgeoisie than with the aristocracy. The aristocracy appears in his plates – seen from a respectful distance. He is much closer both to the world of friends and the worlds of the carnival, the small artisans, the tarts, the poor, the dispossessed.

Edgar Chahine was born in 1874, probably in Vienna, to Armenian parents, and was taken as a child to Constantinople, where he lived until he was eighteen. Determined to study art he travelled to Venice, where he studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti under Paoletti. In 1895 he went to Paris, where he briefly studied at the Académie Julian with Benjamin Constant and Jean-Paul Laurens. His true master was, however, the life of the teeming streets of Paris. 'As lively as was his enthusiasm for the exquisite grace of Tiepolo,' wrote Roger Marx in 1900, 'once Mr. Chahine's vocation had taken shape he was to move towards an art of expression rather than one of decoration. Thoughtful and sensible, the drama of reality appeals to him more than the fantasies of dreams; he aspires to truth, a truth imbued with character and from which emotion is never excluded. That which has struck him and held him in the moving kaleidoscope of Parisian life, all of which was new to him, is less our feverishness, our turbulent passions, than the spectacle of misery and hard work, the saddening parade of beings conscious of their degradation and dedication to the simulation of pleasure.'

At the 1896 Salon of the Société des Artistes Français he exhibited a painting called *Le Gueux* (The Tramp). The paintings he exhibited at the Salon during the following three years also dealt with poverty and degradation, and they were all part of a series the artist called *La Vie Lamentable* (Lamentable Life).

In the spring of 1899 Chahine attempted his first etching. He was immediately fascinated by the possibilities of the medium, which he wished to explore as fully as possible. He therefore apprenticed himself to Eugène Delâtre, with whom he discovered the endless effects achieved with etching, soft grounds, aquatint and drypoint. Delâtre opened the world of colour printing to him, and introduced him to the variations in inking and the properties of various papers. At that year's Salon Chahine exhibited two paintings, but also three etchings and a drypoint. Loys Delteil, editor of *L'Estampe Moderne*, and Henri Béraudi admired, praised and encouraged him. By the end of the year he had completed twenty-five prints, and critics, bibliophiles and collectors were already applauding him. Edmond Sagot promptly signed him up for his gallery. Clément Janin, critic, collector and editor, drew up a catalogue of the first thirty prints by Chahine which was

published in *L'Estampe et L'Affiche* (The Print And The Poster) in 1899. Articles in praise of Chahine's graphics appeared in the *Revue d'Art* by Léon David and in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* by Roger Marx in 1900.

Eugène Rodrigues, lawyer, collector and bibliophile, as well as writer and critic under the name of Erastène Ramiro was a founder member and president of *Les Cent Bibliophiles* (The Hundred Bibliophiles), a group of collectors who met at regular dinner parties and commissioned lavishly illustrated books. He commissioned Chahine to etch the menus for the Society's dinners in 1899, 1903 and 1906, and encouraged him to attempt book illustrations, but it was not until 1906 that he was able to commission him directly.

Chahine concentrated almost wholly on graphics between 1899 and 1911. He was awarded a Gold Medal at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900 and another Gold Medal at the Venice Exhibition in 1901. Moving from the Société des Artistes Français, he was elected a full member of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, in whose Salons he was henceforth to exhibit. In 1903 Anatole France, of whom he was to etch several portraits, asked him to illustrate his *Histoire Comique* (Comic History). Chahine executed twenty-eight etchings, aquatints and drypoints for this work, all printed within the text, though separate sets of the prints were printed without text. He also etched six plates which were not used in the book. In 1905 he produced thirteen prints for Octave Mirbeau's *Dans L'Antichambre* (In The Antechamber).

In 1906 Eugène Rodrigues commissioned Chahine to illustrate a text by Gabriel Mourey, the London *Studio*'s first Paris correspondent and now established as a leading critic and writer. The book was *Fêtes Foraines de Paris* (Paris Street Carnivals). Chahine produced one hundred and ten prints and a further three unused ones. Some were tiny, but all teem with the life of the street fairs, the performers, acrobats, clowns, comedians, street singers, the merry-go-rounds, caged lions and performing dogs, jugglers and wrestlers, organ grinders, weight lifters and tight-rope walkers – and the public: idlers gathering round, children, the poor, the bourgeois at café tables, the rich and elegant, all forming an extraordinarily lively mixture. Chahine did all the etchings using a soft ground, enabling him to achieve soft 'pencilled' effects. He also engraved the designs on copper plates larger than the page sizes so that there are no plate marks in the book; the illustrations look as if they were drawn directly on the page. Chahine was also to execute a number of large prints on similar subjects.

That same year Mary Jacobsen, to whom he had been engaged for some time, died of tuberculosis. Chahine was



Ada, 1901. Colour drypoint.

utterly overwhelmed by the tragedy, and broke down completely. His friends, including Sagot, rallied round, and sent him to Italy for a change of scenery. He spent three months there, travelling through Tuscany, Umbria and his beloved Venice, achieving a kind of serenity through feverish bursts of work. He would spend his days exploring the towns, Pisa, Sienna, Perugia, Assisi and the wooded surroundings, the ruined convents and ancient buildings, seeking unusual corners. He would sketch them, then go back to his hotel room, where he would transfer the sketches to copper plates, which he would etch there and then. Two of the prints were copies of pictures by Luca Signorelli, two others were after Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. The Venice plates nearly all dealt with people rather than buildings: a pretty girl sitting in a garden, an artichoke peeler on the Rialto, a pearl stringer, a beggar. On his return to Paris, Sagot published the forty-nine etchings, aquatints and drypoints with an etched title in an edition of seventy-five copies on various papers, with a brief introduction by Roger Marx. The publication of *Impressions d'Italie* (Impressions of Italy) was to mark the end of his first phase as a graphic artist. He had worked out his distress through hard work and now found himself moving away from graphics and returning to pastels and oil paintings.

In the years between 1898 and 1910 Chahine depicted an absolute cross-section of Parisian life. He devoted many plates to the poor, the dispossessed and the street entertainers but he also devoted many plates to the half-world of the theatre, late-night cafés and the dance-halls. With almost cruel accuracy he captured the brief moment of youthful beauty of the *trotteuses*, the *midinettes*, the models and whores: moments of coquettishness, triumph, flirtation; but also moments of sadness, defeat and despair. *Le Promenoire* is one of the most affecting

of such plates. The promenoire was the area around the bar at the rear of some theatres and music halls, where men went stalking and girls of marginal virtue went hoping to be captured, if only fleetingly and not very lucratively. In this plate Chahine placed a girl at the bar, clothes and ringletted curls intended to make her look very young indeed, waiting, almost desperately. A toper at the bar, a multitude of swells and flocks of girls merely emphasise her utter isolation. The proofs in colour of this plate, with their ravishing chromaticism, are even more effective in this respect.

The wealthy and elegant make their own entrances. In some of the night time plates they appear to be slumming, enjoying in their own way the pleasures of theatre, of street carnivals, of shopping or café life. Chahine also executed a series of plates showing elegant ladies in their horse-drawn carriages or landaux, taking the air on the avenue des Acacias or on the way to the Bois de Boulogne, seeing and being seen in their latest hat or gown. Some of his prints depict individual elegant women, gracefully seated or posed, or sporting with a tennis racket. Here, too, Chahine finds it difficult to flatter. When the women are pretty he shows them so, but when they are not he makes no effort to idealize them.

Several of his carriage prints date from 1907, as does his splendid study of two women with that short-lived *beauté du diable*, *Brune et Blonde* (Dark and Fair). Between 1909 and 1910 he executed several large drypoint portraits of Ghemma, a chubby girl sporting an elaborate turban and an infectiously mischievous grin.

His personal tragedy was compounded by the horrifying massacres of Armenians by the Turks in 1908 and again in 1915, when more than a million were slaughtered while others were exiled to the desert of Northern Syria to die of starvation.



Le Carrousel/Merry-go-round. Etching, drypoint and aquatint.

The outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 made any attempt at normal life impossible. In fact, Chahine hardly executed any prints between 1911 and 1921.

In 1921 Chahine married Simone Julia Gaumet, a young art student from Paris. Their son, Pierre, was born in 1930. The year of his marriage was to mark the date of his return to graphics, with a series of prints of Venice, which he revisited. A retrospective exhibition of his works in 1923 in Milan led to a revival of interest in him by the critics. The following year an entire room was devoted to his works at the Venice Biennale. In 1925 he became a naturalised Frenchman.

His return to book illustrating dates from 1925, when he executed a single etching for a book by Georges Montorgueil, *Paris, Ses Eaux et Ses Fontaines* (Paris, Its Water and Fountains) which accompanied a further fourteen prints by other artists. The book was published by the Société de Saint-Eloy, for which he was to execute etched illustrations in association with other artists for another eight books between then and 1937. More important illustrations included *La Mort de Venise* (The Death Of Venice) by Maurice Barrès with twenty-six etchings in 1926 and Gustave Flaubert's *Novembre* with twenty-one etchings in 1928. His most exciting illustration is

undoubtedly Colette's *Mitsou* with twenty-six etchings, aquatints and drypoints plus four additional plates and a further sixteen which were not used. In 1933 he illustrated *A Vau-l'Eau* (Drifting) by J.K. Huysmans, in 1934 a novel by the Goncourt brothers, *Soeur Philomène* (Sister Philomena). The economic crisis of the 1930s now made it impossible for books to be published in limited editions with large numbers of original etchings. Chahine was fortunate enough to illustrate two more books, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* in 1935 and Verlaine's *Bonheur* (Happiness) in 1936, but each was illustrated with colour reproductions in heliogravure, not with original etchings. The last major exhibition of his prints to be held in his lifetime was at the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad in 1940.

Nearly two thirds of Chahine's prints were destroyed in 1926 when his studio burnt down. More were destroyed in 1942 in a flood. Fortunately many had been sold when published, and his publisher Sagot and Sagot's successor, his son-in-law Maurice Le Garrec, held others, which survived. Edgar Chahine died in 1947. The catalogue raisonné of his graphic works, established by M. R. Tabanelli, lists four hundred and twenty-nine original prints.



Les Chaussettes/The Socks, 1903. Aquatint and drypoint.



*Madinette/Working Girl, 1904.
Soft ground etching, etching and drypoint.*

Opposite
Lunois
Lanternes Chinoises/Chinese Lanterns.
Colour lithograph.



M MOULIN ROUGE MOULIN ROUGE

BAL

TOUS Les SOIRS

LA GOULUE



H. Aubrey



Opposite
Toulouse-Lautrec
La Goulue, 1891. Colour lithograph poster.

La Brune et la blonde/The Brunette and the Blonde.
Etching and drypoint.



ALEXANDRE LUNOIS

(1836-1916)

The great vogue for colour lithographs in the mid 1890s led print publishers to persuade a number of painters to join in the movement. One picture dealer who was determined to invade this new market was Ambroise Vollard. In 1896 he purchased a lithographic press and commissioned a number of artists to produce lithographs which he was to publish in albums in 1896 and 1897. He had opened his gallery in 1894 and had given Cézanne an important exhibition the following year. He had already published an album of lithographs by Bonnard in 1895 and one by Redon in 1896, so that the new series of albums devoted to painter-engravers was a logical and original idea. He commissioned some artists who had already executed fine lithographs. He also commissioned some artists who knew little or nothing of the technique, including Renoir, Cézanne, and Alfred Sisley. These produced some colour lithographs which proved instantly popular, and which have remained greatly sought after and are today both very rare and very expensive. It is, however, only by a vast stretch of the imagination that they can be considered as original lithographs. Renoir's large *Mother And Child*, like his later *Portrait Of His Son Pierre* published in *L'Estampe Original*; Cézanne's *Large Bathers*, or Sisley's *The Geese On The Banks Of The River* were all transferred to the lithographic stone, inked, printed and proofed by a great lithographic craftsman, Auguste Clot, and his technicians.

One of the prints in the Vollard albums was entitled *Femme Espagnole Remettant Son Soulier* (Spanish Woman Putting Her Shoe Back On). It is a simple composition, its fine, somewhat subdued colours emphasising the textured aspect of the composition which, though printed on smooth-surfaced paper, gives the illusion of a watercolour on paper with an irregular surface. The artist was Alexandre Lunois, now largely forgotten, though he was in his day quite famous. It was Lunois who taught Clot many of his techniques so, in a sense, Lunois may be considered at least partly responsible for the delight several generations have derived from a series of colour and monochrome lithographs by Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters.

Alexandre-Joseph Lunois was born in Paris in 1863. His father, whose family came from Normandy, kept a linen-goods shop in the rue Nicolas-Flamel. Young Lunois was not a particularly good student. From his earliest years he loved to draw but had no patience with formal training as it was given

in school. His father was not displeased that he should follow an artistic career: he himself liked to draw, and his hobby was embroidering tapestries he designed. He was friendly with several established Salon painters and lithographers, and he sent his son to study at the studio of Achille Sirouy. Lunois spent a year and a half there, much of his time being spent in keeping the place clean and running errands. He found the whole system of teaching oppressive and incomprehensible. Sirouy was a lithographer, which meant in those days someone who spent his time transferring to lithographic stone the reproductions of works by others. Lunois quickly picked up the technical knowledge of Sirouy, but derived pleasure only from his visits in his spare time to the Louvre and from the summer holidays he spent with his grandfather who had retired to the country in the département of Orne. He would draw and paint the countryside, the peasants and animals, as tenaciously as he copied the paintings in the Louvre.

Back in Paris he spent hours in the studios of two Salon painters, Léon Lhermitte and Ulysse Butin, whom he had originally met in his parents' shop. Their specialities were landscapes and marine paintings, and they helped the young Lunois with advice and studio space. Armed with the knowledge of reproductive lithography, the sixteen-year-old began a three-year stint perfecting the transfer of paintings by his two patrons onto lithographic stones. In 1882, when he was nineteen years old, Lunois saw two of his lithographs and one of his etchings, reproductions of works by Lhermitte and Butin, accepted at the Salon of the Société des Artistes Français. He was awarded an Honourable Mention. J.C. Cazin was sufficiently impressed to commission him to reproduce on stone his painting *Nocturne*. Edmond Sagot, always seeking new talent, promptly became his dealer. Between then and 1893 he was to publish nineteen lithographs in black and seventeen in colour. One of the first to buy his prints was Fantin-Latour. At the 1883 Salon the lithograph *Nocturne* and another one after Lhermitte got Lunois a Medal 3rd Class. Félix Bracquemond liked what he saw, and was to give Lunois much valuable advice over the years.

Lunois continued to send reproductive lithographs to every Salon. In 1885 he also sent a painting, in 1886 an original lithograph portrait; he was beginning to make a reputation as a reproductive lithographer. He was awarded a Medal 2nd Class, but his ambition was to receive a travelling scholarship. This he was finally awarded in 1888, thanks to a most effective lithograph after Daumier. He promptly left for Belgium and then Holland. As a child he had pored over travel books, descriptions of life in North Africa and Constantinople;

Opposite

La Buveuse d'absinthe/The Absinthe Drinker, 1892.
Colour lithograph.

this first taste of travel was to confirm his first love. He was to spend a large part of every year travelling and sketching; the rest of the year was spent transferring his sketches and memories into paintings, pastels, drawings, lithographs and etchings. That first trip to Holland enabled him to discover the island of Volendam, where life had remained untouched by the modern world. Fascinated, he recorded everything he saw in dozens of note books and reams of sketches. He was back in Paris at the end of January 1889 but left a few days later for Algeria to join a map-making expedition. He spent six months exploring the hinterland, sketchbook ever present, leaving the expedition in July only to travel on to Morocco. Lunois travelled down to Fez with an introduction to its Pasha from the Pasha of Tangiers, finding great courtesy wherever he went. In November he crossed the sea to Spain, visiting Cadiz, Seville, Granada, Cordoba, Toledo and Madrid, earning a little money as he went by drawing portraits. His year of travel ended on December 27th, 1889.

Lunois was determined to make his mark with original work. As soon as he returned to Paris he devoted his time to perfecting the technique of wash lithography. Though long known as a technique, it had been almost completely abandoned in the nineteenth century because of its complexity in printing. Unlike ordinary lithographs, where the design was drawn on the stone with a greasy pencil, wash lithography entailed painting the design onto the stone with a brush, thus giving sweeps and blocks of solidity, and an enormous range of grays from white to black. It was, however, extremely difficult to ink and print, and most professional lithographic printers hated the process, which often necessitated a lot of retouching. Lunois was as versed in the techniques of printing as in those of preparing and drawing on the stone. He was fortunate to meet a sympathetic young printer in Auguste Clot, and Lunois set about training Clot to achieve the results he desired. Clot was to print most of Lunois's lithographs in the years that followed, but always under the artist's close supervision.

In 1891 Lunois joined the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, in whose Salon he exhibited paintings, pastels and lithographs. Joining as an associate, he was elected to full membership the following year. In 1892 he returned to Holland, then on to Algeria and Tunis. He had been experimenting with colour lithography for a while, and in 1892 he exhibited his first colour lithograph, a portrait of a Moroccan girl, Yamina Ben-Si-Djelloul. In the years that followed he alternated travels in North Africa and Spain, both of which he was to celebrate over and over again in his lithographs, achieving some rich and strong colours. In 1906 he travelled to Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and married a young Swedish medical student. She was later to translate some of Hans Christian Andersen's tales into French, a book that was published with sixty etchings and one hundred woodcuts by her husband and an introduction by Eugène Rodrigues.

Writing an article on 'The Original Lithograph' in the *Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne* in 1899, Léonce Bénédict traced its history: 'Chéret was the first to extract from the bosom of the commercial presses, from the very lap of publicity, all that magnificent motley flowering of posters whose noisy and gay mosaic animates the gray and morose walls of our sad cities. In about 1882 Dillon, a student of Carolus Duran, attempted



La Toilette. Colour lithograph.

his first studio stone out of a dilettante's curiosity, to almost totally veer his talent in this new direction after the intimate success of this essay. Steinlen and Willette brought their useful contributions to the sudden development of lithography through the application of drawing on stone to the literature special to Montmartre in the days of greatest glory for its taverns. Then came Lunois, another professional, who was young then, but attracted early by the touching spectacle of the whole of life, who sees as a painter and wants to force the stone to fix and multiply his feelings.'

Although Lunois painted and drew a great deal, executed a large number of pastels and etchings, it was as a lithographer that he was best known, and he always saw his subjects as lithographs. Indeed, one of his earliest biographers, Emile Dacier, wrote: 'In Lunois it is lithography which excels: in his hands painting and pastel are reduced to the conditions of future lithographs, and as for illustration, that too is lithography.'

In 1894 Lunois changed dealers, and went to Gustave Pellet. Between then and 1908 Pellet was to publish one lithograph in black and thirty-one in colour. Honours came to Lunois. He had been awarded a Silver Medal at the 1889 International Exhibition in Paris. At the Universal Exhibition in 1900 he was made a Knight of the Légion d'Honneur. His works were purchased for a number of public collections in France and throughout Europe.

Lunois illustrated a number of books from 1893 onwards,



La Convalescente, Lithograph.

often copiously. For Jacques de Voragine's *La Légende Dorée* (The Golden Legend) translated by H. Piazza, he executed seventy-three colour lithographs and as many drawn borders which were cut on wood by M. Thomas. For Guy de Maupassant's short story *La Petite Roque* (Little Roque) he supplied twenty-three etchings. For Théophile Gautier's *Le Roman de la Momie* (The Tale Of The Mummy) he supplied forty-two illustrations which were etched by Léon Boisson; while for Gautier's *Fortunio* he executed twenty-four lithographs in colour. He also produced various book and magazine covers and individual lithographs for various publications, including two for a compilation of songs, *Chansons d'Aïeules*, which was published with a colour lithograph cover by Mucha. His book illustrations were admired and sought after, but they are on the whole rather disappointing. Though often individually attractive, they are too small and conventional to rise to the heights of insane romanticism of *Fortunio* or sink to the depths of torture and horror described in the *Golden Legend's* lives (and especially deaths) of the Saints.

Lunois's last trip to Spain was in 1908. The rest of the year was devoted to completing the sixty etchings and one hundred drawings which were cut on wood by Suzanne Lepère for his wife's translation of the Andersen tales, a book he himself published in October 1909. Shortly after completing the etchings Lunois fell gravely ill, and came close to death. After recovering somewhat, he decided to travel to a country he had long dreamed of, Turkey. After a short stay in Constantinople, he crossed into Anatolia, and spent several months exploring this area. The painted, etched and lithographed records of his

travels were exhibited in Paris in a major exhibition in 1912. He died in 1916.

Lunois's work has long been unfashionable, largely because of its picturesque quality. Much of what he recorded later became standard tourist fodder. Volendam, which he saw as a precious link with the past, a working village with real people involved in their traditional occupations, retaining their traditional customs and costumes, has since been turned into a theatrical attraction for hordes of gawping package tourists, but this in no way invalidates his records of it as it was. The same has happened to so many of the scenes he recorded in Spain, from the bullfights to the gypsy dancers. In North Africa he recorded not only Arab life and customs but also some Jewish customs. In Turkey he recorded the last of the ancient traditions, shortly before the young Turks and later Attatürk attempted to bring the country forcibly into the twentieth century by banning many of the customs and clothing.

He only rarely executed lithographs dealing with contemporary French life, but these have a charm of their own. Some, like the *Absinthe Drinker*, profit from the boldness of colour contrasts he developed in executing his Spanish and North African prints, where blues, reds and yellows are used to great effect. Lunois was almost entirely self-taught. His technical mastery, which he passed on to Clot, is often allied to a curious naiveté and innocence of vision and sureness of composition which give many of his prints more than the purely decorative attraction they already possess.



Une Nuit au Burrero/A Night at the Burrero. Colour lithograph,



A la Fenêtre/At the Window, 1893. Colour lithograph for L'Estampe Originale.

HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC

(1864-1901)

The works of Lautrec are in many ways both the complement and the antithesis of those of Steinlen. Where Steinlen sought to redress social wrongs by identifying with the poor, the dispossessed, the oppressed and illustrated their lives and pains with lively satirical jibes designed to awaken liberal conscience, Lautrec observed the social scene as a fascinated outsider, and illustrated the night-spots, the café-concerts, the singers, actors and dancers. Where Steinlen sought to commemorate the glories and tribulations of the Republicans and the Commune, Lautrec as a legitimist Royalist delighted in making fun of the Republicans. Together their works cover the full spectrum of life, giving an extraordinarily vivid impression of the Montmartre of the 1890s.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa was born at Albi on November 24th, 1864. His father, the Count of Toulouse, was a great sportsman, and the young Henri was taught to ride from the earliest age. As a child he loved to draw and paint, which he did all over his school exercise books. It might have remained as no more than a hobby had not Lautrec broken both hips in an accident when he was thirteen. They healed badly, and while his torso continued to grow, his legs remained stunted. The boy was extremely sensitive, and tormented by his ungainly shape, complicated in his view by short-sightedness and thick lips which convinced him he was a monster of ugliness. His father barely tolerated him. Himself a talented amateur draftsman, he considered art to be a fitting amusement for an aristocrat, but certainly not an occupation. He had no objections to his son receiving instructions from his friend René Princeteau, a painter specialising in pictures of horses. The young Lautrec also received advice from John Lewis Brown, who spent some time with Princeteau. Lautrec was, at the time, attending the Lycée Condorcet, and living with his mother, who had taken a house in Paris.

Though Princeteau was helpful, Lautrec felt the need for more specialised instruction, so he enrolled at the Bonnat Studio, then afterwards at the Cormon Studio. He spent a total of four years between these studios, but seems to have carried very little away from those Academic painters. His own taste ran to the Impressionists, and he had great admiration for Degas, closely followed by Manet and Renoir; he was also fascinated by Japanese prints. His earliest paintings already showed a certain individuality, and his characteristic method of cross-hatched lines soon appeared.

Montmartre exerted a tremendous fascination for Lautrec: while still a student at the Cormon atelier he moved into a studio there, close to Steinlen's house, and soon met many of the artists and writers of the area. Forain introduced him to

the Mirliton cabaret and, when Bruant launched a new magazine of the same name in 1885, Lautrec supplied drawings for it signed 'Tréclau', a transposition of his name. The following year Vincent van Gogh arrived in Paris and registered at Cormon's atelier. Lautrec made some portrait sketches of him at the atelier and in Montmartre, where van Gogh was staying with his brother Theo. Lautrec continued to send drawings to various magazines, such as *Le Courrier Français* and the *Paris Illustré*. He was painting a great deal, but having trouble showing his work.

The cabarets attracted him, and he spent many hours in them, observing and drawing. He met a young dancer (good) and singer (less good) called Jane Avril, and a great friendship developed between them. One of the newest and most successful cabarets was the Moulin-Rouge. On its facade was a cut-out windmill, and behind the main building was a 'garden', tables and chairs cramming every available space facing a covered stage flanked by a huge wooden elephant, through which the dancers burst. It had originally been launched with a cheerful poster by Chéret, but when the Moulin-Rouge had featured a notorious cancan dancer called La Goulue (The Greedy One), its director Zidler commissioned a poster from Lautrec, who had already supplied the cabaret with a couple of large paintings. Lautrec promptly went to the printer and was there given brief instructions, after which he drew his design directly on the stones.

The *Moulin-Rouge* poster is a dramatic composition showing Valentin (known as 'The Boneless One') in grey outline in the immediate foreground. In the background are the silhouettes of spectators, in which one recognises Jane Avril with her feathered hat. In the middle ground is La Goulue kicking her right leg up to display dazzling white underwear. She was then at the height of her fame, but the constant search for new faces (and bodies) very soon made a has-been of her. Later, when she was reduced to appearing in street-fairs, Lautrec decorated her caravan with paintings. Valentin was an extraordinary dancer, whose long and supple legs whirled in con-

Opposite

Toulouse-Lautrec

Le Divan Japonais, 1893. Colour lithograph poster.

Page 86

Toulouse-Lautrec

May Belfort, 1895. Colour lithograph poster.

Page 87

Toulouse-Lautrec

May Milton, 1895. Colour lithograph poster.

DIVAN JAPONAIS

75 rue des Martyrs



Ed Fournier
Directeur

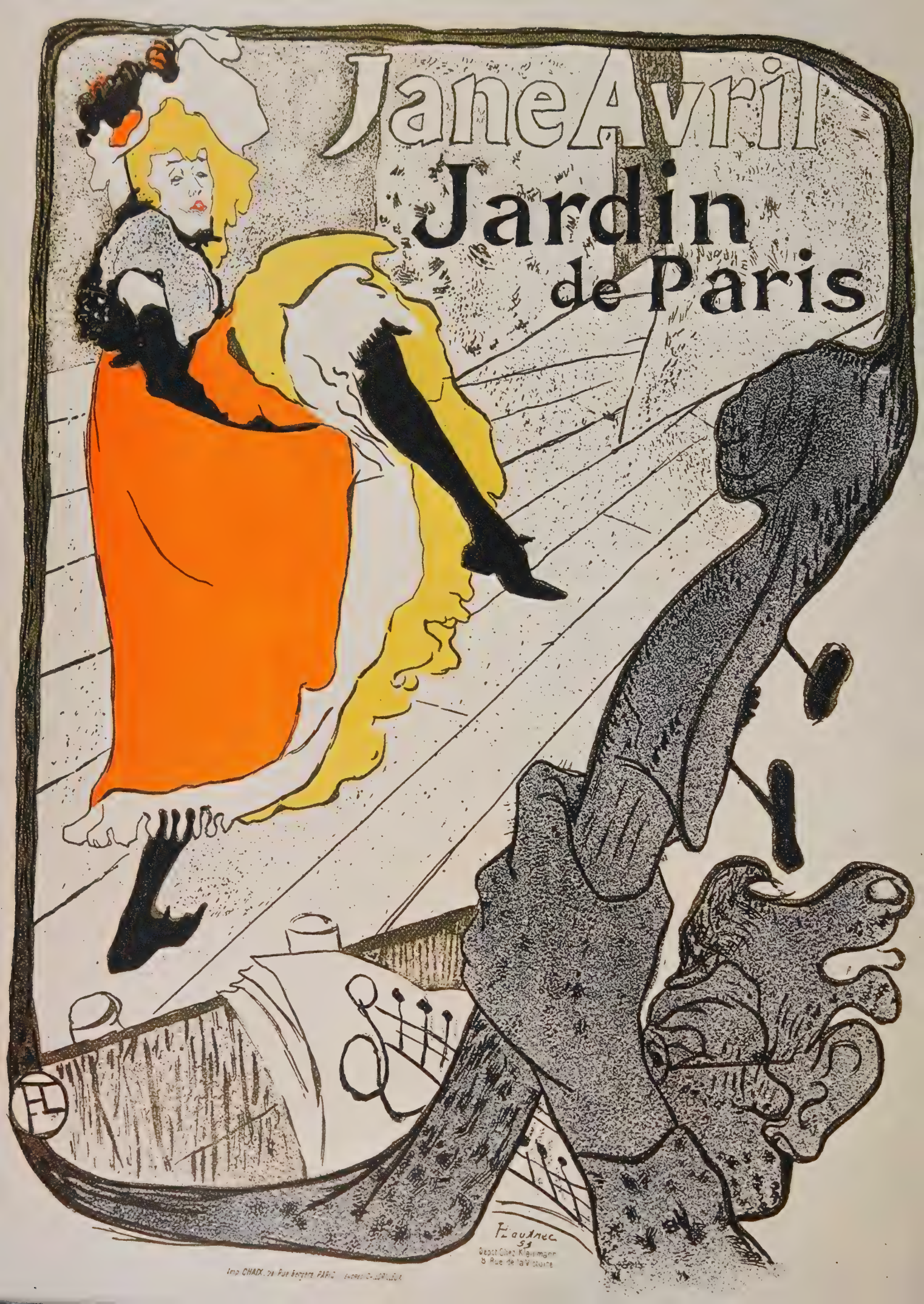
Hautec



May Belfort

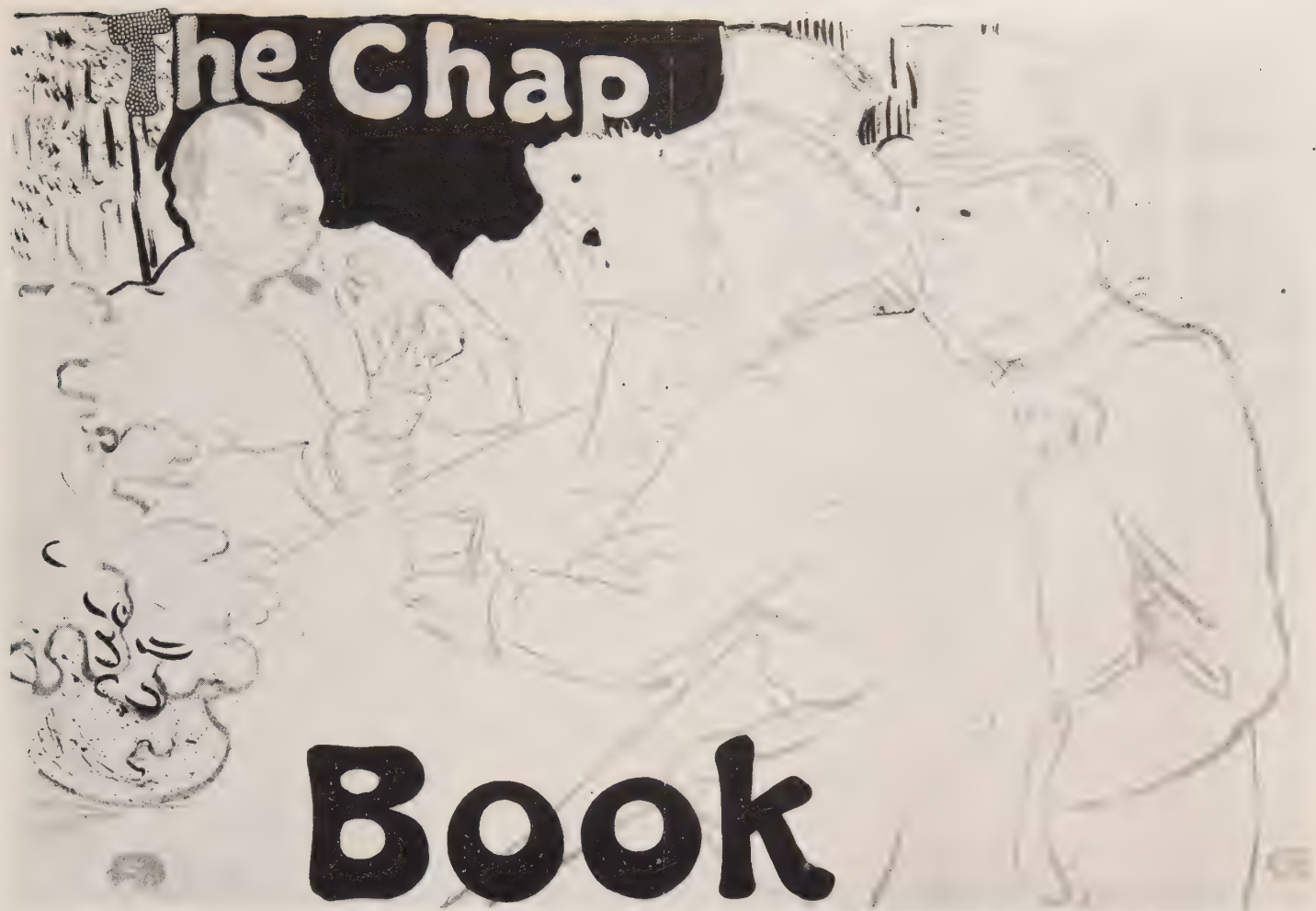


Jane Avril Jardin de Paris



F. Audner
53

Decorateur d'Intérieur
5 Rue de la Victoire



Irish and American Bar, 1896. Colour lithograph for The Chap Book.

stant motion. He worked in a bar in the daytime. Although Lautrec knew him well, and drew him many times, he would ignore him utterly if he met him in the daytime. Valentin, expecting no less, never indicated in the daytime that he recognised any of his night-time admirers.

Shortly after the appearance of this poster the Boussod et Valadon gallery commissioned two Moulin Rouge lithographs from Lautrec. He executed a poster for the *Dépêche de Toulouse* advertising a serialised novel based on the Calas affair and showing a hanged man: and one advertising *Reine de Joie*, a novel which was a thinly veiled attack on the Baron de Rothschild and the banking establishment. He also executed two posters for Aristide Bruant, who had temporarily left his Le Mirliton to appear at the Ambassadeurs and Eldorado theatres. Steinlen went on illustrating Bruant's song sheet covers. Lautrec had illustrated one of them as early as 1885, but it was as a poster artist that Bruant most admired him. When the second volume of Bruant's songs appeared with Steinlen's illustrations, Lautrec supplied still another poster to advertise the publication, though the poster was also used to advertise Bruant's return to the Mirliton as well as appearances elsewhere.

Maurice Joyant, a former school friend of Lautrec's from

Opposite

Toulouse-Lautrec

Jane Avril, 1893. Colour lithograph poster.

the Lycée Condorcet, had opened a gallery in the boulevard Montmartre, and he gave Lautrec his first exhibition in 1893 in a two-man show with the then better known Charles Maurin. Born in 1856, Maurin had studied with Boulanger and Jules Lefebvre. A member of the Société des Artistes Français, he exhibited in their Salons between 1882 and 1901, receiving an Honourable Mention in 1882, a Silver Medal two years later and a Gold Medal in 1889 after which he exhibited Hors Concours. A painter of portraits and genre subjects, he was also an exceptionally fine etcher, producing both delicate and strong etchings and aquatints in colour of nudes, dancers and scenes of daily life. He and Lautrec remained friends, and there is little doubt that Lautrec both impressed and influenced Maurin.

The exhibition brought Lautrec favourable notices and a degree of fame. He was spending more time on his lithographs, producing one for an English firm of paper manufacturers, Bella Brothers, advertising *Confetti*. He met André Marty, who published a very limited edition of a hand tinted lithograph depicting Loïe Fuller in her swirling robes, a print Lautrec also dusted with gold powder. He used to work at the Ancourt printing works, drawing directly on the stones from memory, using no sketches, and carefully obtaining spatter effects with a toothbrush he always carried with him. The Loïe Fuller print did not unduly impress the dancer: Chéret had produced two posters for her, as had Georges de Feure,



La Passagère: Salon des Cent, 1896. Colour lithograph poster.

Hyppolyte Lucas and Pal (Maurice de Paléologue); the most fashionable sculptors and painters of the day had reproduced images of her. The homage of a new young artist cannot have seemed over-impressive at the time.

Shortly after publishing the Loïe Fuller lithograph Marty launched the first album of *L'Estampe Originale*. This was to be a series of albums of original graphics in a variety of mediums by established and young artists, many of them Symbolists: Bernard, Bonnard, Bracquemond, Carrière, Chéret, Denis, Duez, Fantin-Latour, de Feure, Gauguin, Grasset, Sir William Nicholson, Camille, Georges and Lucien Pissaro, Puvis de Chavannes, Redon, Renoir, Rops, Signac, Vallotton, Vuillard and Whistler were among the contributors, while fin-de-siècle subjects were provided by Henri Boutet, Eugène Delâtre, Norbert Goeneutte, Helleu, Ibels, Lepère, Lunois, Hermann-Paul, Richard Ranft and Henri Somm. Maurin contributed an aquatint portrait of Lautrec, while Lautrec himself provided the cover for the first year, an eight colour lithograph showing Ancourt's master printer, Père Cotelle at his press, with Jane Avril looking at a proof.

Jane Avril had already been the subject of a number of paintings by Lautrec. Her appearance on the *L'Estampe Originale* cover was to be followed by several more appearances in prints. Probably at her suggestion, Lautrec was commissioned to execute a poster for a new café-concert in the rue des Martyrs called Le Divan Japonais. Its sole claim to fame was the fact that Yvette Guilbert was appearing there. Lautrec's poster is one of his most effective, all in yellow, grey and black: Jane Avril is seated in the foreground as a spectator, backed by the writhing shapes of cellos and the conductor's arms, while in the background is Yvette Guilbert, her head cut off, recognisable only by her long black gloves. The one splash of colour is Jane Avril's orange hair under her eternal black feathered hat. Lautrec's poster for Jane Avril's opening at the Jardin de Paris appeared a few days later, and showed her on stage, kicking. Once again Lautrec used the cello, but as a motif framing the composition in an Art Nouveau fashion. This heralded her return to the stage after a two-year retirement during which she had lived with Lautrec. In the year or two that followed the cancan became a respectable and tame dance: the days of La Goulue, when dancers exhausted themselves in frantic movements which revealed everything through transparent or split underwear had gone. In 1896 Jane Avril joined Mlle Eglantine's troupe on an English tour, and Lautrec again supplied a poster.

1893 brought Lautrec two marks of recognition. He was invited to join the Société des Indépendants and commissioned to design a lithograph for their dinner (in which he drew a milliner putting the finishing touches on Jane Avril's hat); and he felt immensely honoured to be invited to exhibit at the fifth exhibition of the Société des Peintres-Graveurs Français, whose members included Redon, Bracquemond, Helleu, Chéret and Lunois. Towards the end of the year Marty published an album called *Café-Concert*, to which Lautrec contributed eleven lithographs and Henri-Gabriel Ibels another eleven, all of performers, including Jane Avril and Yvette Guilbert. Ibels was then better known than Lautrec, who was to do a portrait of him as well as becoming godfather to his son. Lautrec also produced a number of covers for song sheets composed by Désiré Dihaut, published by Ondet, whose



Ambassadeurs – Aristide Bruant dans son cabaret, 1892. Colour lithograph poster.

offices were in the same building as Ancourt. He also produced the title page and several illustrations for a collection of Dihaut's songs, *Vieilles Histoires* (Old Stories), to which Ibels and Rachon contributed. The cover showed Dihaut with a bear on a lead, the bear being the author of the lyrics, Goudezki, who sang the songs at the Chat Noir. Dihaut had been a leading bassoonist at the Paris Opéra when Degas had painted him in about 1872. Dihaut's sister, a piano teacher, had also modelled for Degas. When they met Lautrec, who also used them several times as models, Désiré tried to introduce Degas to Lautrec, who had long admired him, but by 1894, when Lautrec had executed a colour lithograph for *Les Ambassadeurs* inspired by Degas, the latter became furious, and publicly accused him of plagiarism.

Lautrec had an exhibition in May 1894 at the Durand-Ruel gallery, but much of the rest of the year was devoted to a series of portraits of Yvette Guilbert, to whom he had been introduced by Gustave Geffroy, the art critic. Sixteen of these were published in a lithographed album (with text by Geffroy) by Marty. The singer signed the album, though she was horrified at the way she had been depicted, and her friends and family were furious. Lautrec had emphasised her grimaces in a caricatural style which captured her in a precise, though apparently cruel fashion. When Lautrec submitted sketches for a poster for her, she rejected them, and chose Steinlen to

design her poster. Lautrec nevertheless commissioned the firm of Emile Muller to transfer one of his Yvette Guilbert designs onto a ceramic tile in a limited edition. He also produced a series of portraits of actors which were published by Kleinmann, Steinlen's publisher. The following year Lautrec, having gone to a café-concert called Les Décadents to see Jane Avril dance, was fascinated by a young Irish singer there, May Belfort, and he executed a poster for her, showing her holding the little kitten she carried on stage. He also drew several other lithographs of her. Another brief passion was for Marcelle Lender, of whom he drew several lithographs dancing the bolero, standing and bowing. He was commissioned by Julius Maier-Graefe to execute a colour lithograph of Lender which was published in a German magazine, *Pan*. He also executed a poster for May Milton's tour of the United States, of which only one hundred copies were printed. One great disappointment was over a competition for a poster for the American *Century Magazine*, which was serialising the life of Napoleon. The series had been launched with an enormously successful poster by Eugène Grasset, who was to supply a second poster for the series. The contest was organised by Boussod et Valadon, and they asked Lautrec to submit an entry. The judges, however, chose a poster by Lautrec's old friend Luc Métivet. The furious Lautrec had one hundred copies of the poster printed at his own expense and distributed many of them to his friends.

Lautrec had become close to the *Revue Blanche* magazine publisher and writers. He drew a poster for it, using Misia Nathanson as the model. He used her on several occasions for the most incongruous subjects, even after she divorced the director of the magazine and later remarried.

Fear of ridicule prevented Lautrec from frequenting the women of his milieu, though he kept in touch by frequently dining at his mother's house in Paris. He had become completely urbanised, a town house garden supplying all the nature he needed. He began to spend more and more time in the brothels, in whose inmates he detected feelings and sensitivities he believed 'honest' women lacked. In 1896 he met Gustave Pellet, Legrand's publisher, and the latter published an album of ten lithographs plus a cover called *Elles*. Using three models, Mlle Popo (Miss Bum), her mother, Mme Baron, and a fat woman, he lyrically traced the daily life within the brothel in a manner such that one could in most of the lithographs believe the subjects to be ordinary housewives. Pellet, who was addressed by Lautrec as 'l'intrépide editeur' (the courageous publisher), eventually published twenty lithographs by him, though he found these far more difficult to sell than those by Legrand or Lunois.

In 1897 Lautrec was commissioned to provide lithographed illustrations for Clémenceau's *Au Pied du Sinai* (At The Foot Of Sinai), tales of Jewish customs in Galicia and Carlsbad. He also supplied Vollard with a magnificent

colour lithograph, known variously as *Une Partie de Campagne* or *La Charette Anglaise* (The Picnic or The English Dog Cart). He was already drinking too much, sharing his time between the brothels, whose Madames he occasionally escorted to the theatre, and two lesbian bars in Montmartre, Le Hanne-ton and La Souris. At the latter he often saw George Bottini, a tragic figure. Born in Paris in 1874, Bottini had studied at the Cormon atelier, and was then also painting the night clubs, the dance halls, the brothels and the lesbian scene. He was to exhibit at Kleinmanns in 1899, then at the Druet gallery, and was instantly hailed as a master. He had, unfortunately, contracted a venereal disease at the age of fifteen, and was to die in an insane asylum at the age of thirty-one.

Lautrec's old publisher Boussod had merged with Manzi and Maurice Joyant in 1888; Joyant saw to it that Lautrec never lacked commissions, and arranged frequent exhibitions for him. In 1898 Lautrec supplied Joyant with one more lithograph of Marcelle Lender, and the English firm of Bliss and Sands published an album of eight new lithographs of Yvette Guilbert. He also essayed a few drypoints on copper and on zinc, which included portraits of Charles Maurin and Henri Somm. He produced a striking poster for Jane Avril, but it was not used, and only twenty-five copies were printed.

Lautrec did almost no work during January 1899, spending all his time drinking. He was hallucinating more and more frequently, and few of his friends had the patience to deal with him. In March he was confined to a clinic at Neuilly, where he was dried out. He spent two months there, during which he resumed working on a series of animal designs to illustrate Jules Renard's *Histoires Naturelles*, a task he had begun in 1895. The book was published in 1900 by Floury. He also executed three monotypes at the clinic.

After leaving the clinic Lautrec spent the summer with Joyant at his favourite resort, Taussat, near Arcachon, where he liked to go swimming and boating. He had, in fact, frequently travelled to England with Joyant and had twice visited Spain, whose brothels he had enjoyed. In the autumn he returned to Paris, where he continued to publish a number of lithographs, including a splendid one in colour, *Le Jockey*. He was invited to join the jury for the 1900 Universal Exhibition, but declined because of his uncertain health. Back at Taussat for the summer of 1901, Lautrec suffered a severe attack which left him paralysed. His mother had him brought to their castle of Malromé where he died on September 9th, 1901, shortly before his 37th birthday. Joyant persuaded Lautrec's mother to donate a collection of her son's graphic works to the Cabinet des Estampes (Print Collection) of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Lautrec's father never conceded that his son had talent.

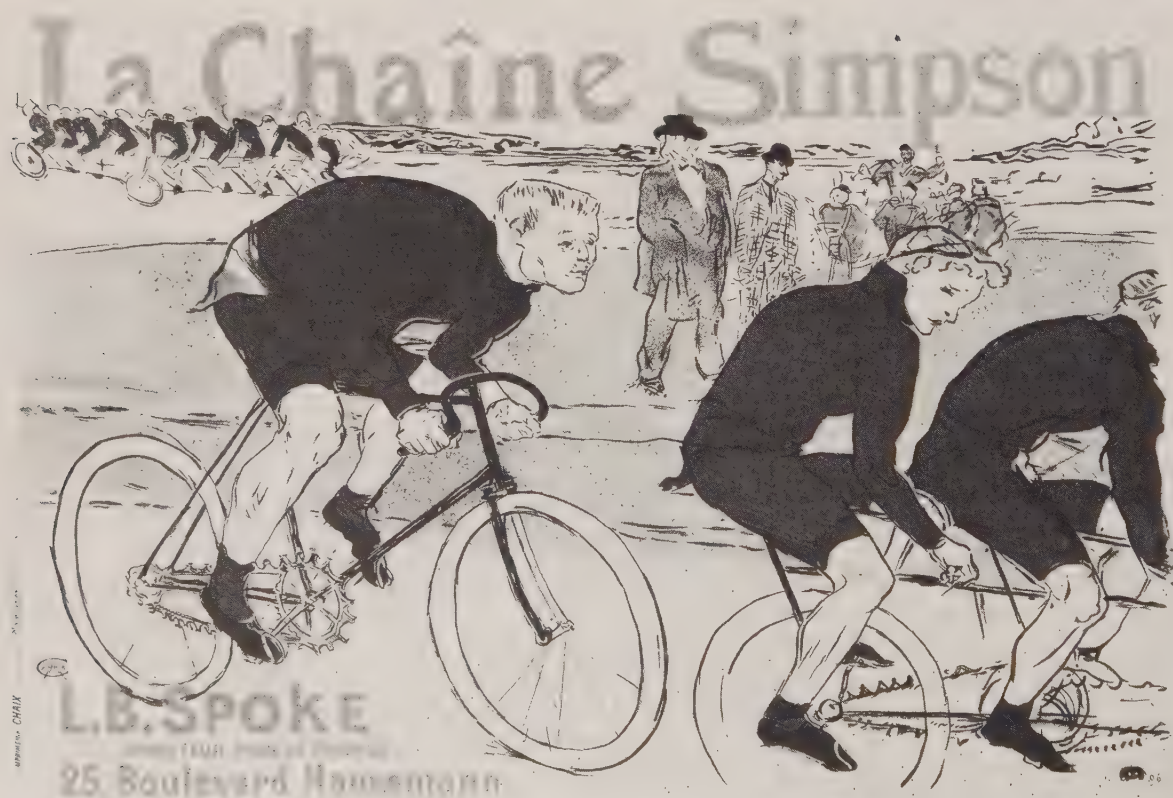
Opposite

Confetti, 1894. Colour lithograph poster.






Troupe de Mlle Eglantine, 1896. Colour lithograph poster.



La Chaîne Simpson, 1896. Colour lithograph poster.



La revue blanche

bi-mensuelle

1e n° 60 cent.

12 francs par An

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Paris

Charpentier et Fasquelle, éditeurs
11, rue de Grenelle



JANE
Avril

H. Stern, Paris.

1899

Jane Avril, 1899. Colour lithograph poster.

19. FEB. 1979



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Victor Arwas

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